No. 270 / AUGUST 1995

THE NI NEW INTERNATIONALIST

Women

Still something to shout about

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The monthly **New Internationalist (NI)** magazine was founded by Peter and Lesley Adamson in 1970. Together with a range of other publications it is published by New Internationalist Publications Ltd which is wholly owned by the New Internationalist Trust and co-operatively managed by:
Accounts: Damian Bourke, Gill Moore.
Administration: Alison Ware.
Design: Alan Hughes, Clive Offley, Ian Nixon.
Editorial: Vanessa Baird, Chris Brazier, Nikki van der Gaag, David Ransom.
Editorial (North America): Wayne Ellwood, Richard Swift.
Magazine circulation: James Rowland.
Magazine marketing: Michael York.
Production: Fran Harvey.
Publications editor: Troth Wells.
Publications marketing: Dexter Tiranti.

Subscription enquiries

Please write to your subscription office with full details including (if possible) your subscription number shown on the magazine address label. Please inform us of any change of address.

SUBSCRIPTION OFFICES AND ANNUAL PRICES
UK: PO Box 79, Hertford, SG14 1AQ Tel. (01992) 822899 Fax. (0171) 830 8585.
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Individuals £28.50; Institutions £50. Please pay in sterling by UK Cheque, Eurocheque, Visa, Mastercard or UK Banker's Draft. Despatch by air only.

Editorial and advertising offices

UK Editorial: 55 Rectory Road, Oxford OX4 1BW. Tel. (01865) 728181. Fax. (01865) 793152.
UK Advertising: Tel. (01384) 373421. Fax. (01384) 441904.
Canada: 1011 Bloor Street West, Toronto, Ontario M6H 1M1. Tel. (416) 588 6478. Fax: (416) 537 6435.
Australia: 7 Hutt Street, Adelaide, S.A. 5000. Tel. (08) 2321563.

Print and distribution

Origination: Graphic Facilities, London UK.
Printed on environmentally friendly paper by Cradley Print Ltd, Warley, West Midlands, UK.
UK news trade distributor: COMAG Specialist Division, Mercury Centre, Central Way, Feltham, Middlesex TW14 0RX. Tel. (0181) 844 1000. Fax. (0181) 751 2666.
North America. Publications Contract 101400. Postage Paid at Toronto. US 2nd class postage paid at Lewiston, NY. US Post-master: send address changes to: New Internationalist, PO Box 1143, Lewiston, NY 14092.

Permissions and indexing

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Indexed in the Canadian Periodical Index, CPI CD-ROM, CPI Online, the Canadian Magazine Index, CBCA OnDisc and the Alternative Press Index.

It helps us to occasionally allow carefully screened organizations to mail our subscribers. If you do not wish to receive their material please write to your subscription office.

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MAGAZINE DESIGNED BY **ALAN HUGHES**
FRONT COVER (WITH APOLOGIES TO EDVARD MUNCH)
BY **WENDY HOILE**

THIS MONTH'S **THEME**

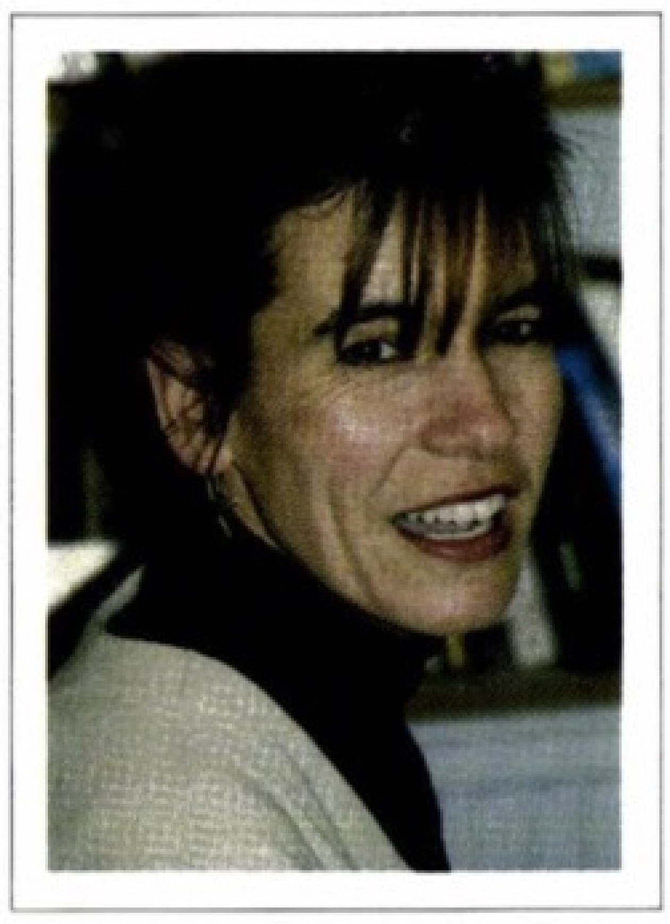
Women

FROM THIS MONTH'S **EDITOR**

As I sit here writing this, women from all around the world are booking tickets and organizing visas. At least 30,000 of them will be flying to Beijing at the end of August to attend the biggest-ever international gathering of women – the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women and the parallel Forum for non-governmental organizations.

Over the last few months I have been attending many of the preparatory meetings, including the 'PrepCom' in New York – the last meeting of the Commission on the Status of Women before the actual conference.

It has felt like coming home. I have been working on women's issues since I first became committed to feminism 20 years ago. In New York I met old friends and made new ones. I also rediscovered a sense of what an international women's movement feels like – and that it is just as relevant today as it ever was.



In the midst of all this I received the following letter.

'Dear Miss van der Gaag,

I hope you are not going to be banging on about *women's* stuff. How about covering something interesting like:

a) Running a party for twelve-year-olds (a commonly neglected area) or

b) How to stop homemade icing sliding off the cake (this would tie in nicely with the first suggestion)

Best wishes for the magazine (I know you *try* Dear),

sincerely,

Anthea T Towel.

I thought I'd take this opportunity to reply.

Dear Ms Anthea T Towel,

Yes, I *am* going to bang on about women's stuff.

There are three reasons for this. First, because it is difficult not to when we have dedicated this whole issue to the state of the world's women. Second, because in many places women are in *worse* situations than they were ten years ago and I think this is important. And third, because I sometimes feel from my cosy corner that the women's movement is a bit moribund and I have discovered in the course of researching this magazine that it is alive and kicking. You might spot a purple and green theme running through this magazine – they were the colours of the suffragette movement.

So, Ms T Towel, you might as well stop reading now. I hope you won't though, because I also happen to think that the messages of this magazine are important to us all. And do watch out for reports on the Conference in September – who knows, you might even like to join in some of the events in your own country planned for that time.

Best wishes,

Nikki van der Gaag

Nikki van der Gaag
*for the **New Internationalist** Co-operative*

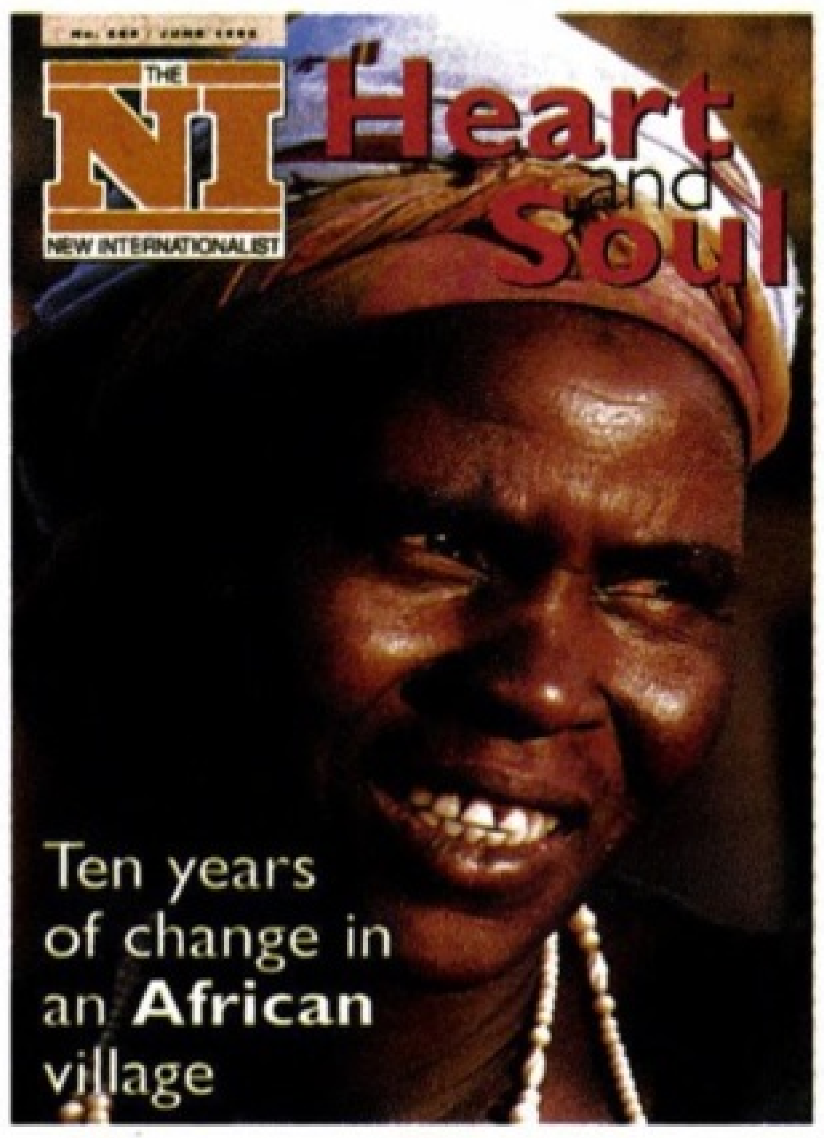
PS I too would like to know about icing on cakes – mine always slides off.

Letters

The **New Internationalist** welcomes your letters. But please keep them short. They may be edited for purposes of space or clarity. Include a home telephone number if possible and send your letters to the nearest editorial office. The address is inside the front cover.

Truer picture

Chris Brazier's description of the images of Africa – ***Heart and Soul*** (**NI 268**) – was very accurate. The news media concentrate on portraying the sensational and crisis aspects of African life, to the detriment of the more mundane, not to mention the positive and the exciting.


THE NI NEW INTERNATIONALIST
Heart and Soul
Ten years of change in an African village

In Ireland many people who have spent time in the 'Majority World' are concerned about this simplistic portrayal of complex and diverse countries. Africans in particular are portrayed as a hopeless dependent mass. This serves to strengthen the sense of superiority many of us already have and clouds the main causes of global inequality.

It is about time that the stereotypes that we are shown of the people of the South were broken down. It is only then that we can begin to co-operate with each other with anything resembling equality.

Comhlámh, the organization for returned development workers in Ireland, is organizing a campaign to encourage the media and non-governmental organizations to present a 'Truer Picture of the Majority World'. For further information, contact us at: 55 Grand Parade, Cork.

Eilish Dillon
Cork, Ireland

Birth and power

I experienced my usual pang of annoyance upon reading Chris Brazier's otherwise fascinating account of Sabtenga (***Heart and Soul, NI 268***). The irritation comes from his (and most other people's) continual reference to birth as 'delivery'. This word is incredibly disempowering to the mother. Midwives, doctors, ambulance officers and even fathers do not 'deliver' the baby. But they are often given the credit for the birth.

With support from calm attendants, mothers can birth their babies very well in their own fashion. Perhaps the woman in Chris's story might not have been torn if Mariama the midwife had not been so aggressive in her management of the birth. The disempowerment of women in this most crucial and female of experiences paves the way for disempowerment at other levels, both in the South and the North. I'm hoping that **NI** can adjust its own language so that others can benefit from this awareness.

Alison Athanassiou
Hendra, Queensland, Australia

Half the story

Steve Eckhardt's *Endpiece* (**NI 268**) on the 'New Conquistadors' only tells half the story – the easy half. There is nothing new about blaming Mexico's problems on US imperialism. The untold part of the story is that Mexico's crisis is to a large extent home-made.

For the past 20 years Mexico has squandered the money received from loans and from selling off its national assets on consumption, prestige projects and populist policies instead of investing it in the country's future. Sixty years of the 'revolutionary' state running major sectors of industry and commerce have resulted in utter inefficiency, corruption and nepotism.

In the eyes of most people privatization cannot make matters worse and even if they don't like the idea of selling nationalized industries and opening the country up to foreign investors, they see no alternative. Even the left-wing PRD, whose support seems to be crumbling, has grudgingly accepted NAFTA, and while the Zapatistas reject it, they have not so far offered a clear alternative national strategy. It is the absence of such a progressive perspective which to me makes the anti-bloodthirsty-US-imperialism line sound rather hollow, even if its analysis is true.

Klaus Graichen
London, England

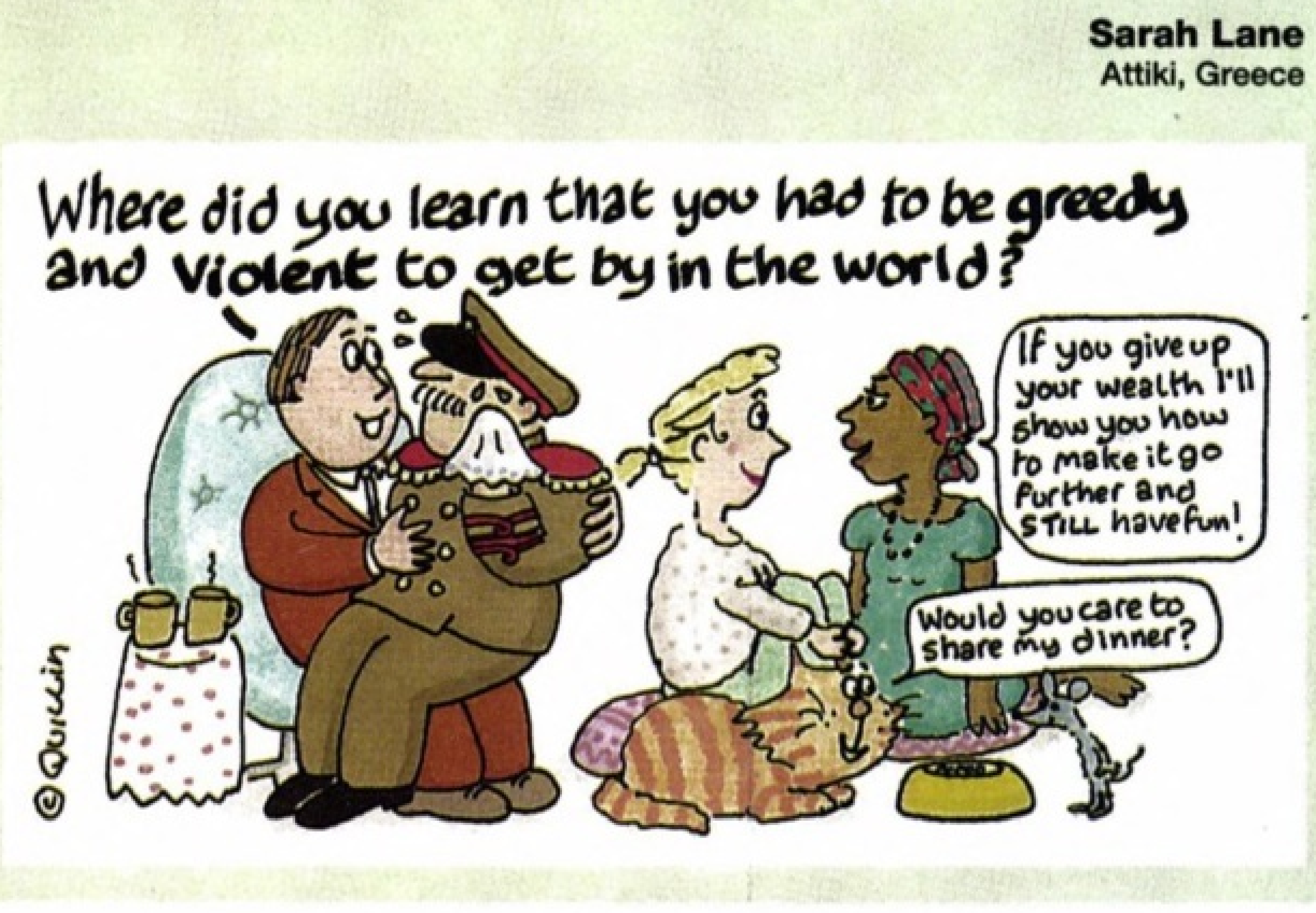
Less criticism, more love

In your issue on ***Nomads*** (**NI 266**) the central concern is people's relationship with the land. You look at one 'use' and highlight the economic, political and social causes which threaten this way of life. But what does this change? There is a chance that we all feel helpless and despondent as the world collapses around us.

But I can do something – if I change my life to become part of the cure not part of the problem. I can look at how I use land, air and water and actively work to improve that use by travelling less, by cultivating any land I can in a helpful way, by reducing my own pollution and my greed (not easy!). But if nomadic people in Africa or Mongolia were pushed aside by greed then that is directly related to my own greed.

Yes, there is injustice, violence, greed and disorder in the world, but if we only look at them we ignore the remedies available to us. Information is always welcome but the next step is to take that information and apply it directly to our own lives: what lessons are there for us about how we lead our lives here today. A little less criticism and a bit more loving help is needed, isn't it?

Sarah Lane
Attiki, Greece


Where did you learn that you had to be greedy and violent to get by in the world?
If you give up your wealth I'll show you how to make it go further and STILL have fun!
Would you care to share my dinner?
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Resistance

I agree with the suggestion in your magazine on ***Hunger*** (**NI 267**) of transcending the international market as a form of resistance. If citizens of countries in debt can become self-sufficient within each community the demands and quirks of the outside world no longer affect them. If the lower classes refuse to participate, then the debt their government and upper classes incurred is left for the upper class to pay. As history has often shown, physical discontent due to hunger or low standards of living has led to drastic political reforms. In most of Europe and America these reforms were not immediately beneficial, but they did lead to entire new political and social systems.

Hunger is a political as well as a social problem. Communal self-sufficiency can, on a limited scale, not only be triumphant by being independent of the international market system but can help create a new system conducive to local relief.

Melina Hoffman
Lincoln Park High School,
Chicago, US

Pilloried

Botswana ranks top in your assessment of 'greatest disparities of income' in your issue on ***Hunger*** (**NI 267**). The figures come from the excellent UN Human Development Report – which all **NI** readers ought to have by their bedsides. The statistics clearly show that the majority of 'developing countries' do not compile statistics on income disparity. Botswana does – and is pilloried.

Those of us from the wealthier countries should be more concerned about the fact that the world's richest 20 per cent – which includes me; does it include you? – owns 60 times more wealth than the poorest 20 per cent.

John D Anderson
Gaborone, Botswana

Aboriginal absence

I was disappointed that you did not include an article in your issue on ***Nomads*** (**NI 266**) about indigenous Australians. Theirs is a culture of hunters and gatherers which is probably one of the oldest in the world.

Australian Aboriginal people have suffered great harm to themselves and their culture since the colonization of Australia more than 200 years ago. They lost all their land upon invasion. They have lost most of their people through genocide. They have been, and continue to be, deprived of their cultural identity.

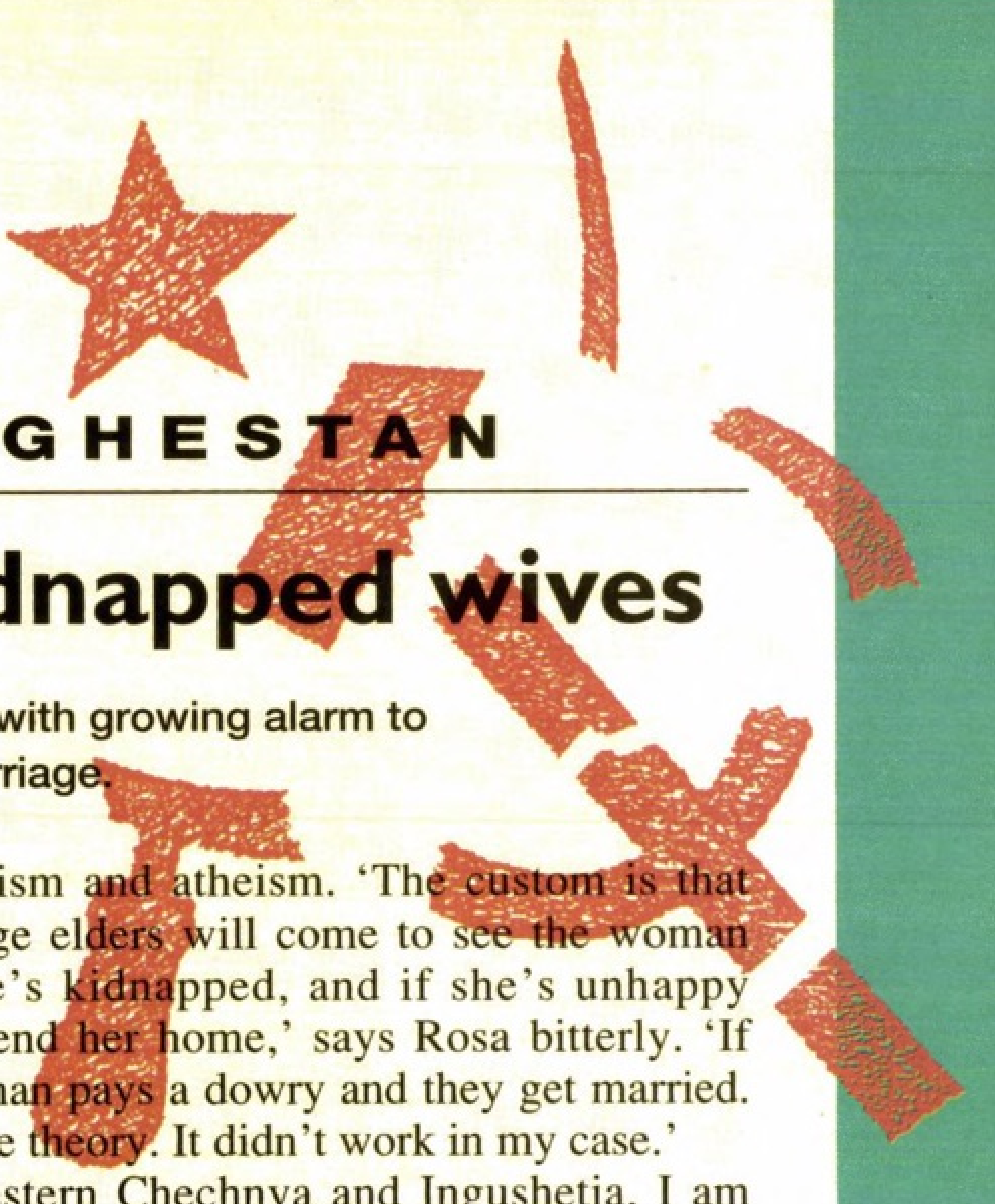
There are some groups of Australian Aboriginal people who remain hunters and gatherers in remote parts of Australia. They are so few and the effects of colonization on this land and people are so great, that I feel Australia needs to be mentioned in an issue about the effects of the 'developed' world on nomadic peoples.

Debra Pittam
Coogee, New South Wales, Australia

It's that time again!

We are once again starting to think about our Annual Editorial Meeting and the suggestions for future magazines. A number of you have already sent in ideas, which we will incorporate into our list, but if you have any more, please send in a brief paragraph before October 15th to **Nikki van der Gaag** at our Oxford address. Thanks!

The views expressed on the letters page are not necessarily those of the New Internationalist.



LETTER FROM **DAGHESTAN**

Crystal glasses and kidnapped wives

Olivia Ward sips champagne and listens with growing alarm to the story of her host's marriage.

Midnight, and the hot dusty wind is merging with the muffled blasts of nearby bombing to convince me it is time to slip into the unconsciousness of sleep. But when Madina comes to my room with her best friend and a bottle of champagne, I am startled enough to put off the much-craved rest.

As a good Muslim wife, my host in this spacious Daghestan home officially doesn't touch alcohol. But at midnight, with the children asleep, she needs some courage for the story she is eager but reluctant to tell.

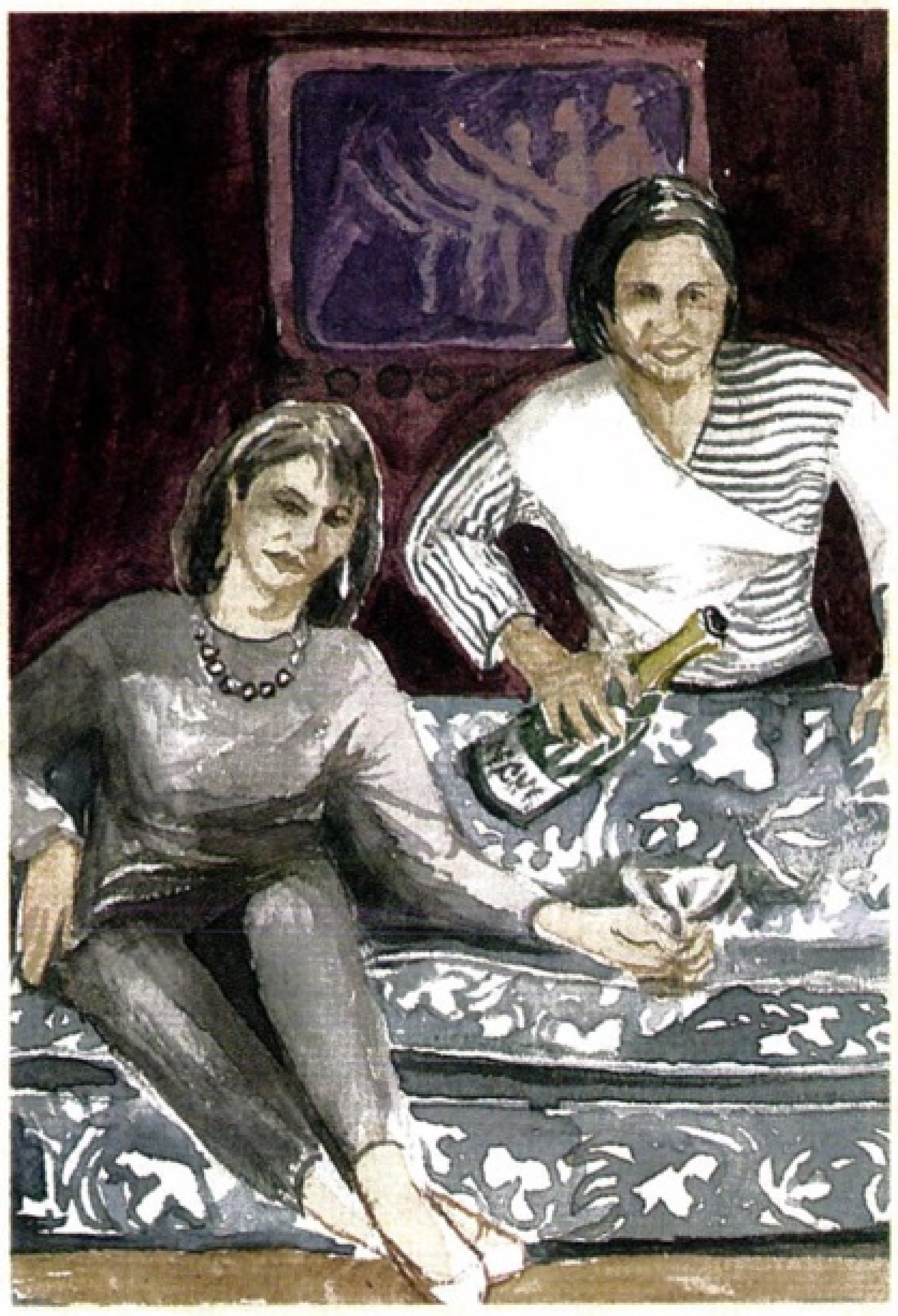
'I was kidnapped,' she declares matter-of-factly after a few sips. 'Fifteen years ago my husband took me to his house and kept me there. I had to marry him. I was so angry and depressed I thought I would never forgive him.'

Madina watches my face as she drops this bombshell, her clear blue eyes defiant.

'You mean that you're held here against your will?'

'Not any more. Now everything is normal. I wouldn't leave – because there's nowhere for me to go.'

I listen with horror coupled with surprise that this capable woman in her mid-thirties should treat such a bizarre fate as merely routine. But in the Caucasus, she says, that is exactly what it is.



'It happens to a lot of women. Men take a fancy to them, carry them off and then they are trapped. That's our life.'

It is difficult to take in what Madina is talking about, here in this comfortable room with shelves of crystal glasses and an enormous television set silently projecting images of scantily-clad women gyrating to unheard rock music.

But for Madina and her 21-year-old friend Rosa those are exotic pictures from a world they could only imagine. Rosa too was kidnapped while still in her teens – by a young doctor whose mother made her life a misery of abuse and drudgery. After ten months she escaped.

'Now I have only one possibility,' she says with little emotion. 'Somebody will want me as a second wife.'

I try to imagine what it is like to live in a culture of kidnapping, where women are traded off by their parents for sums of money. A world almost untouched by more than half a century of communism and atheism. 'The custom is that the village elders will come to see the woman after she's kidnapped, and if she's unhappy they'll send her home,' says Rosa bitterly. 'If not the man pays a dowry and they get married. That's the theory. It didn't work in my case.'

In western Chechnya and Ingushetia, I am told, forced marriage is giving way to mock kidnappings in which women agree to elope with their sweethearts to speed parental consent. But in Daghestan's Muslim communities in the more primitive eastern Caucasus, marriage is often abrupt and unwanted.

I listen to these stories with a sense of helplessness: the normal-seeming home that is my oasis from the war is little more than a prison. But for a Caucasian woman, Madina assures me, the journey from rejection to resignation is often short.

'At first I was furious. I wouldn't even speak to my husband for a year. But once I had children and I got used to the life, things changed. After all, he's pretty good to me, and I've learned to love him.'

I find it difficult to reconcile my ebullient host – a stocky energetic man with a quick sense of humor – with the brute who snatched his unwilling bride from the street.

And I puzzle over my own role. For years in this small backwater the women have waited for someone who would listen to them with more than an apathetic shrug. But does my very appearance, the first Western woman they have ever met, make their fettered lives seem more bearable?

Madina laughs and shakes her head.

'You know what I'm really hoping for now?' she says, pulling off the floral headscarf that binds up her sleek dark hair. 'Old age. In the West women would probably find that funny. Here it's a time of liberation. Nobody cares what you do any more.'

She pours another tiny crystal glass of champagne.

'If we meet when we're 70, maybe we'll both be free. Come and see me then. I'll be here. Thinking about it will keep me alive.' ■

Olivia Ward is bureau chief for the *Toronto Star* in Moscow.

Update

VIETNAM

Loser takes all

High price of victory paid by Hanoi

PETER BARKER / PANOS PICTURES

Past care. Vietnam's health system is collapsing as the free market takes hold.

TWENTY years ago victorious Vietcong troops marched into Saigon as the last American soldiers and government officials were hastily evacuated from the roof of the US Embassy. But did the North Vietnamese really win the war ? Judging by the results today it doesn't look that way.

At a conference held in Paris in 1993 Western governments generously pledged nearly two billion dollars in loans and aid money to support free-market reforms in Vietnam. But the money did not come without strings. In return Hanoi agreed to reimburse $140 million in arrears on loans owed to the IMF by the defeated Saigon regime as a condition for the resumption of new loans. Japan and France formed a so-called 'Friends of Vietnam' committee to lend Hanoi the cash to reimburse the IMF.

The major result of the Paris meeting – the rescheduling of the bilateral debts of the Saigon regime – was kept secret. But Hanoi's signing of this deal was ultimately instrumental in Washington's decision to lift its embargo and normalize trade relations. The irony is that by agreeing to repay debts incurred by the former US-backed government in the Saigon, Hanoi is actually paying back loans which were used to support the US war effort against its own forces.

Meanwhile, a new phase of economic and social devastation has hit Vietnam, spurred by free-market reforms. US dollars have largely replaced the Vietnamese *dong* as the currency of choice. With soaring prices, real earnings have dropped to abysmally low levels. State enterprises have been closed down or steered into bankruptcy. More than a million workers and 200,000 public employees (including tens of thousands of teachers and health workers) have been laid off. With the imposition of school fees 750,000 children dropped out of the school system. Local famines have affected at least a quarter of the country's population; in the Mekong Delta (Vietnam's 'rice basket') 25 per cent of the adult population now has a daily energy intake below 1,800 calories. Health clinics and hospitals have collapsed. Furthermore, there has been a resurgence of malaria and tuberculosis.

Though the Americans were defeated on the battlefield, two decades later Vietnam appears to have surrendered its economic sovereignty to its former wartime enemy. ■

Michel Chossudovsky

Michel Chossudovsky's detailed study of Vietnamese economic reforms was in *Third World Resurgence*, July 1994.

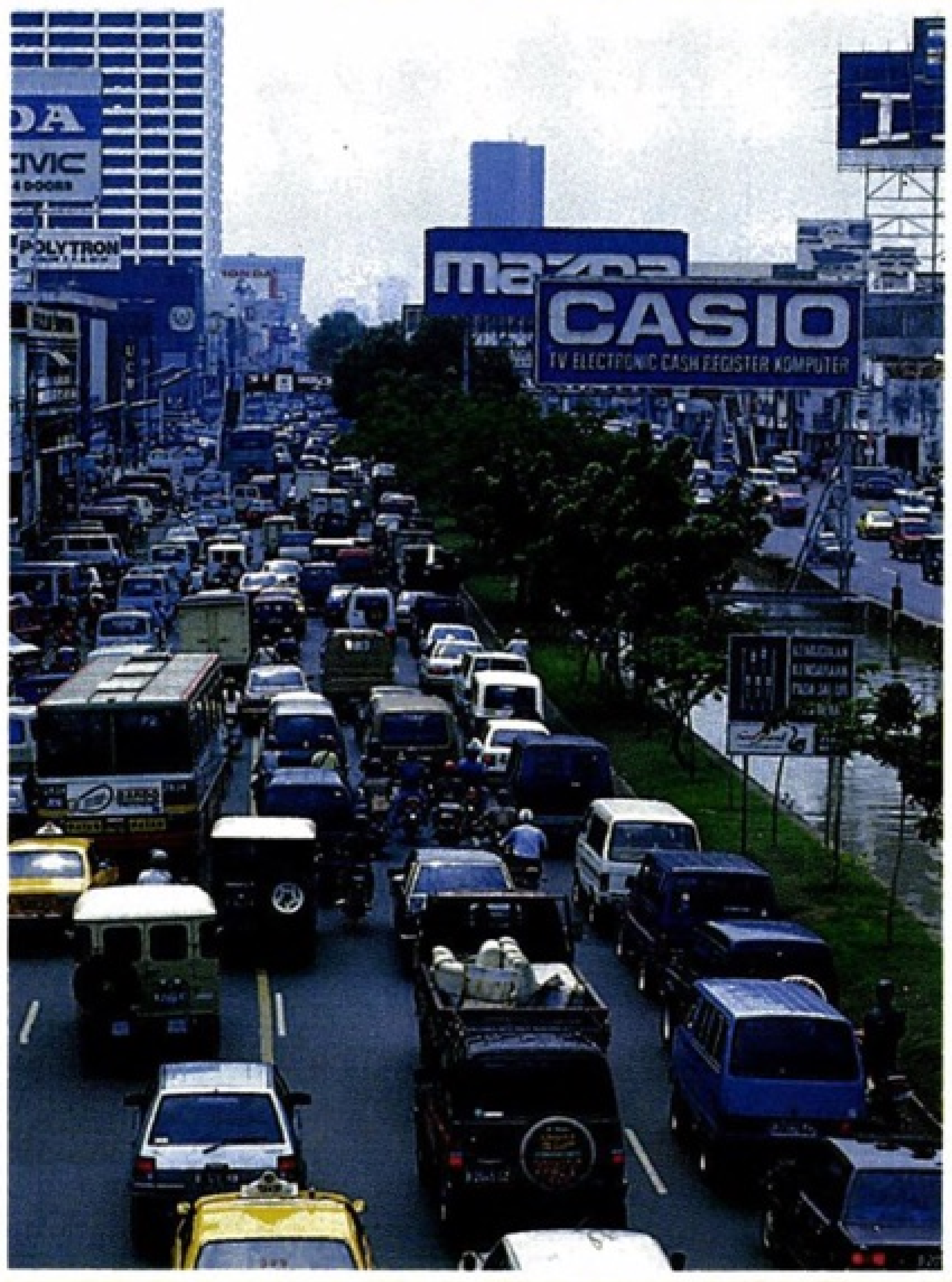
Deforested

Cambodia's forest cover has roughly halved from around 74 per cent of the land area in the 1970s to between 30 and 35 per cent today. The bulk of this forest loss has occurred since 1989. Given current rates of destruction the rest will have gone by the end of the century.

Source: *Forest, famine and war*, Global Witness

Passenging

To combat traffic gridlock Indonesia has introduced a scheme banning vehicles with fewer than three passengers. So a whole subculture of professional passengers (called Joki) has sprung up. People with time on their hands – usually young – hang out close to restricted zones and are then hired by passing motorists. This has given rise to a new occupational terminology: I passenge, you passenge, we are passenging. Police officers have been assigned to stop cars and attempt to find out whether youngsters are genuine offspring of the motorist.



JEREMY HARTLEY / PANOS PICTURES

Imitating the very best of the West: beautiful downtown Jakarta.

Source: *Far Eastern Economic Review*, vol 158 no 17

Motherless

Henri Konan Bedie, President of Côte d'Ivoire since 1993, needs to find himself a mother – or he may be prevented from seeking re-election by an electoral code he himself promulgated last year. The code is designed to keep 'foreigners' out of politics, especially his most prominent opponent, former Prime Minister Alassane Dramane Ouattarra, whose parents came from neighbouring Burkina Faso. Bedie's own origins have, however, been shrouded in secrecy. It is popularly believed he was fathered by the late president Felix Houphouet-Boigny. Opposition parties now claim that his mother, Mo Kobla, came from neighbouring Ghana.

Source: Melvis Dzisah/Gemini

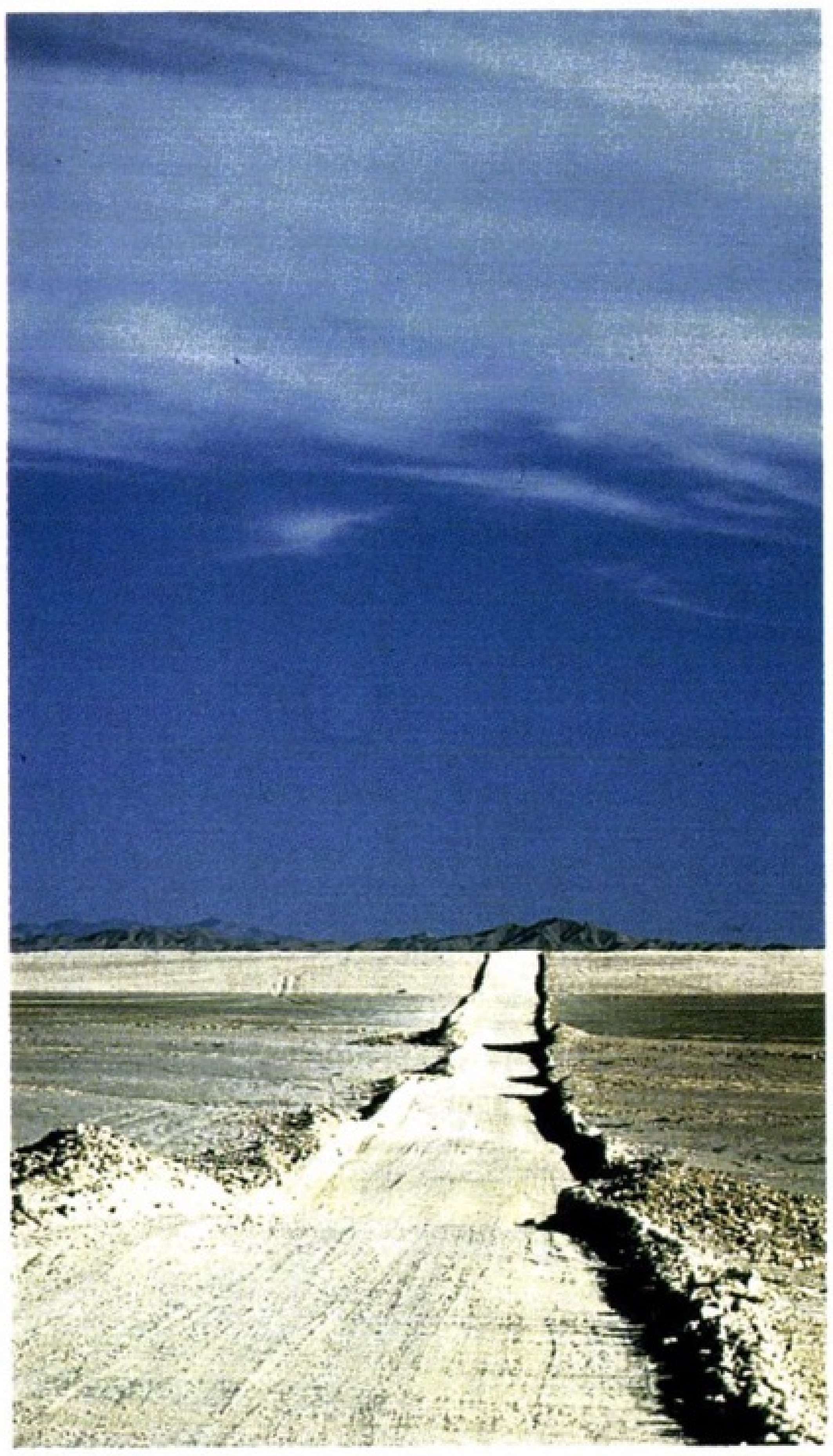
A puff of smoke

From 1985 to 1992, cigarette consumption per adult increased by 20 per cent in China, but at the same time dropped by 13 per cent in 'highly developed' countries. For every cigarette not smoked in highly developed countries, three cigarettes more were smoked in China. If current trends persist, two to three million annual tobacco-caused deaths are predicted for China by the 2020s. These trends suggest that 50 million of the young people alive today in China will die prematurely from the consequences of smoking. There is no age bar on smoking which also goes to explain why 10 per cent of 9- to 12-year-olds and 35 per cent of 12- to 15-year-olds smoke.

Source: WHO and *China Now* no 152

Telescoped

How much is a patch of clear sky worth? The European Southern Observatory (ESO) has been trying to build the world's largest telescope, known simply as the Very Large Telescope (VLT), in the dry air and stable micro-climate of Chile's northern Atacama Desert. But the Chilean workforce has protested that it has not been allowed to unionize and now a local group has claimed it is owed $5 million for the land. The problems have arisen because ESO members thought the site had diplomatic immunity. Some of them (including Sweden and Italy) were not keen to be seen doing business with the Pinochet regime and so did not clarify the original VLT agreements.



CAMERA PRESS

The clearest sky: Chile's Atacama Desert.

Source: *The Economist*, vol 335 no 7911

TOURISM

Coral grief

Red Sea reefs crumble

CHRIS STOWERS / PANOS PICTURES

Off Egypt's Sinai peninsula. Tourists can even do harm under water.

THE coastline of the Red Sea attracts thousands of visitors every year. The Red Sea reefs support up to 1,000 species of fish of which ten per cent are to be found nowhere else in the world. Divers and snorkelers come to marvel at this underwater world. But tourists are fast destroying the very wonders they come to see.

Corals are fragile by nature and sensitive to changes in their surroundings, making them vulnerable to many forms of damage. Resorts such as Ain Suhka, Quseir and Marsa Alaam have some of the richest colonies to be found anywhere. The construction of hotels and holiday villages breaks up and destroys the reef terraces. Silt from the debris floats away to smother reefs elsewhere. At Hurghada development is so intense that the coral has been completely destroyed.

There are other problems. The physical action of shore-divers is gradually abrading the coral terraces. People interested in colourful souvenirs are openly gathering specimens to take home. The anchors of off-shore diving boats rip and scour away at coral colonies and other marine organisms before taking hold.

On the east coast, the southern tip of Sinai offers great scope for diving and underwater photography. The marine national park of Ras Mohamed is a protected and relatively unaffected area, but the number of divers has increased dramatically over the last couple of years. Although dive boats now have fixed moorings, there is little enforcement and the diving fraternity continually disturb and plunder this diverse ecosystem.

The Gulf of Aqaba to the north of Ras Mohamed may run the same gauntlet soon. Giant projects in Taba and Nuweiba are being planned.

In 1994 Egypt brought out a law forbidding building works within 200 metres of any shoreline. But by then sites up and down the west coast had already been sold off. The prospects for effective control to minimize damage now look bleak.

Since 1990 the Egyptian Government has invested vast amounts of money to develop its coastal resorts. An income of $750 million is hoped for from the extra accommodation. Because of recent attacks on tourists in the trouble-spots of the country's interior the Government is promoting the Red Sea as an alternative.

Egypt has a coral paradise that it can ill afford to lose. A rigorous code of conduct is now required for both developers and tourists. If lessons can be learnt from the mistakes of the past, then the future of those places that have not been destroyed or over-exploited will be secured for thousands of people to enjoy. ■

Tony Welwig

Update

PEACE

Walk through the storm

Pilgrimage hits war zone in Cambodia

KOI SAROTH leans on his crutches and stares intently across the border. The wait is long and the heat relentless. But for the 24-year-old Buddhist monk in Cambodia the arrival of a rag-tag group of 32 pilgrims at the border with Thailand marks the start of one more try for peace in his country.

'I wanted to come, so Cambodia can have peace sooner,' said the young monk, waiting to welcome the Interfaith Pilgrimage for Peace and Life that was making an eight-month trek from Auschwitz in Poland to Hiroshima in Japan to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the end of World War Two.

The pilgrimage had already passed through Bosnia, the Gaza Strip and Iraq. In Poipet, Cambodia, it entered an active war zone. In the previous ten days the border town had been hit by several shelling attacks in which at least 12 people had been killed and 38 injured.

ROGER BARLOW / CAMERA PRESS

Peace and prayer: Cambodian monks.

'I'm willing to risk my life to do this,' said 26-year-old Joe Roche from the US. And risk there was. After the group left Poipet, the Khmer Rouge – the Maoist group which formerly ruled Cambodia – shelled the town, killing a small boy and injuring 18 people.

Brother Gyoshu Sasamori, a Japanese monk, commented: 'The most important message we can bring to them is solidarity with the Cambodian people – since most of the international marchers are from Japan and America, which supported the Khmer Rouge in the past.'

Christine Graillot, a secretary from France, originally joined the walk for three weeks in Israel. 'Coming back to work after that was meaningless,' she said. She took leave-of-absence from her job and rejoined the march in Thailand. 'It's nothing rational. If I use my head, it doesn't make sense... my heart tells me to be here.'

US psychologist Robert De Young, who is blind, works with torture victims and war veterans. 'Many of them left parts of themselves in this region,' he said. 'I'm doing this *for* me, but *because* of them.'

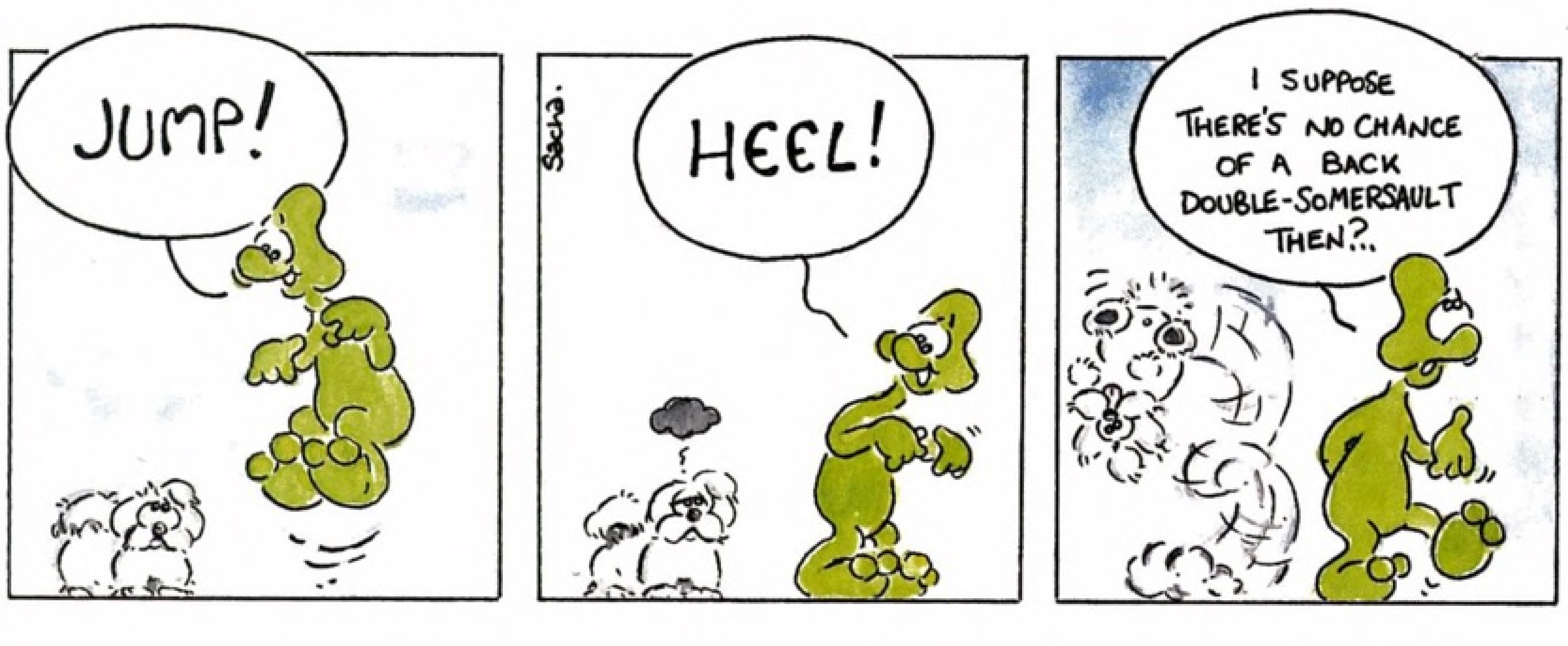
Margo Grant, a 66-year-old Australian, said the reaction of Cambodians made the risk and discomfort of the march worthwhile: 'In the villages people were coming out and crying. Soldiers were putting down their guns and asking to be blessed,' she said of a similar walk she joined the previous year.

Bob Maat, a Jesuit who has worked with Cambodians for almost 15 years, said: 'War in Cambodia is like a thunderstorm. It's sunny, then it's raining and storming, then the sun comes out like before... Life goes on.'

And so, the walkers say, will the peace marches. ■

Emilia Casella/Gemini

Chlorophyll by Sacha


JUMP!
Sacha
HEEL!
I SUPPOSE THERE'S NO CHANCE OF A BACK DOUBLE-SOMERSAULT THEN?..

More conflict

During the 1950s fewer than ten wars were waged at any one time. By 1993 there were 34 major continuing conflicts in the world. In 1994 the number of UN-registered refugees had jumped to 23 million, up from 15 million in 1989. Since 1976 the number of refugees has risen at a rate of more than 12 per cent annually.

Source: Populi, vol 22 no 2

For whom the bells toll

In India's Bihar state, prospective bridegrooms are being kidnapped and forced to marry strangers, usually girls from families who cannot afford to pay the excessive dowry demands customary in India. During the 'marriage season' in June and December parents of modest income hire specialist bachelor-kidnapping squads to abduct a suitable male in the vicinity.

Most favoured are those men in government service, followed by bank and public-sector employees. Within the week, the 'groom contractors', who have been known to shadow their victims for days, at times snatching them off buses and trains in broad daylight, supply a compliant groom, who has usually been beaten senseless. Local politicians have been known to play a role in these forced marriages and the police turn a blind eye.

Ultimately, official apathy and Bihar's peculiar social and caste mores lead the victim and his family to compromise and accept the bride as part of the family. But she is rarely looked on kindly, adding to the woe of being a woman in one of the poorest, most violent and caste-ridden states in India.

Source: Rahul Bedi/Gemini

Ban Barbie

In Malaysia, the Consumers' Association of Penang has called for Barbie dolls to be banned, citing experts' views on the negative effects of the dolls on children. The proposal has drawn strong and angry reactions from the local press and several members of the public.

Reasons cited for the ban are the wrong aesthetics promoted by the doll's blonde, leggy and non-Asian appearance.

Furthermore, according to Professor Ciam of the Department of Social Psychology in Education at the University of Malaya, the Barbie doll does not encourage creativity and the use of imagination in children because everything about them is 'fixed' and ready-made .

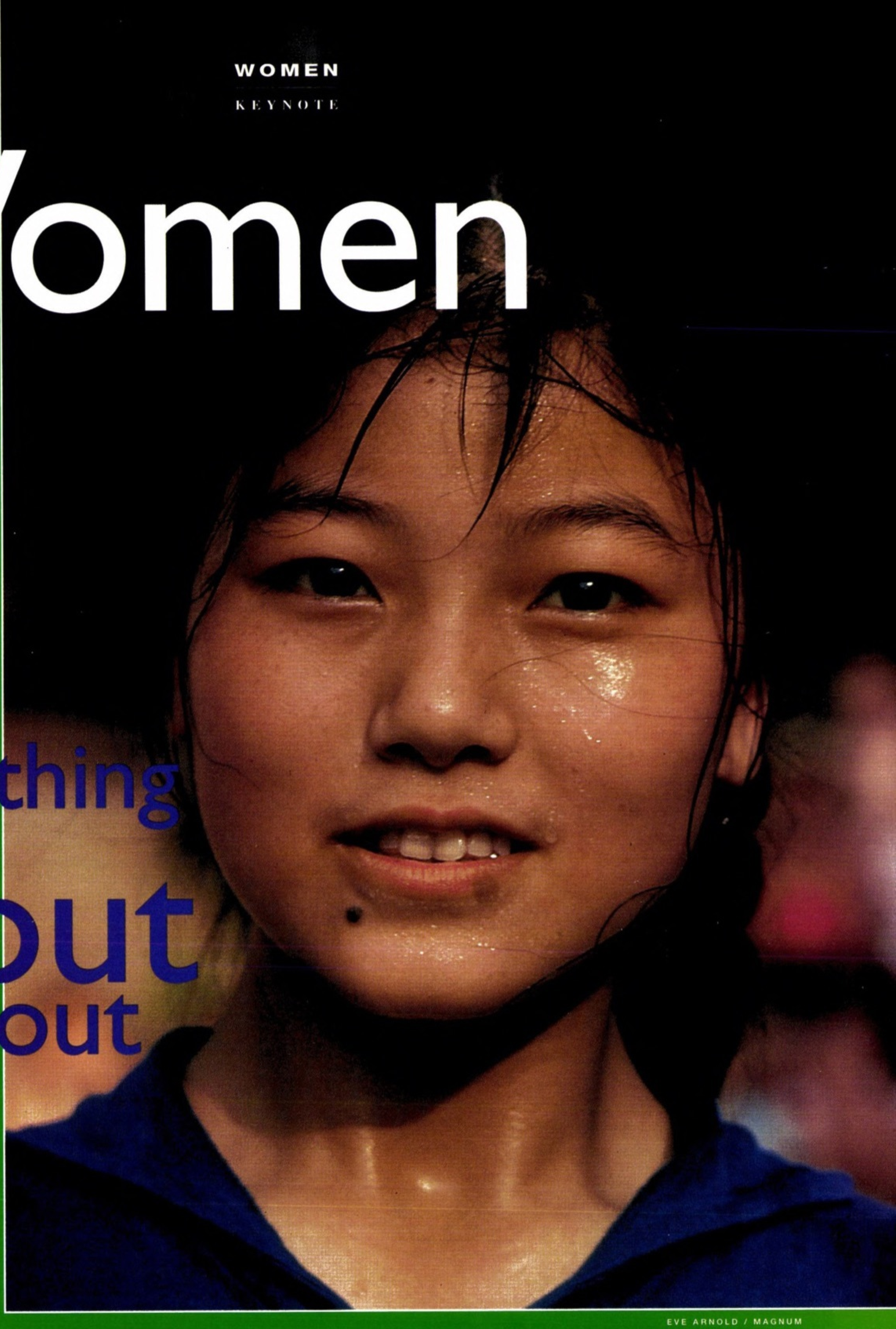
Mary Assunta and Martin Jalleh, Third World Network.

Quote

All people are members of the same family. They have a common origin in creation. If one limb is struck by pain all the others are gripped by anxiety. If the suffering of other people doesn't hurt you, you don't deserve to be called human.

Muslih-ud-Din Sa'di,
thirteenth-century Persian poet.

Women



EVE ARNOLD / MAGNUM

Still something to shout about

Women are facing up to a ruthless killer. **Nikki van der Gaag** asks if there is still a feminist movement to defend them.

THE 'world's most ruthless killer' is coded as Z59.5. It has meant 'widening gaps between rich and poor, between one population group and another, between age groups and *between the sexes*' [1] (my italics). It has caused more suffering to more people than anything else on earth. And it has got worse over the last ten years. Despite improvements in education and health, for hundreds of millions of women Z59.5 has meant lives lived closer to the edge than before. Beneath the rhetoric of 'post-feminism' and 'equality between the sexes' lies another, more sinister, phenomenon.

So what is Z59.5? A recently discovered virus? A new form of nerve gas? No. Z59.5 is a code listed in the World Health Organization's A-Z of ailments, the *International Classification of Diseases.* It stands for 'extreme poverty'.

In the jargon it is known as 'the feminization of poverty'. It has influenced women's lives more than any other factor over the last decade. In a study carried out over 20 years up to 1990, 'the number of rural women in poverty has increased by 50 per cent, reaching an awesome 565 million, while that of men has grown by 30 per cent to about 400 million.'[2]

The poverty problem is not confined to the Majority World. In the US, almost half of all poor families are supported by women with no spouse present, and their average income is 23 per cent below the official poverty line.

Why have women become so much poorer? There is no one reason. In countries like Kenya and India, cutbacks resulting from the International Monetary Fund's structural-adjustment polices (SAPs) have affected women most because they are the main recipients of education and health services. In the West, economic liberalization and the dominance of the market has meant that those with least earning power – women with children – have suffered most. All over the world men have had to leave their families to seek work: this has meant more women-headed households and consequently more families living in poverty[3] (see the table on page 10).

Selvi from Adiramapattinam in India is one of those women struggling to support a family on her own. 'I have four children and have to feed them from the income I get by selling fish [which she buys from the fishermen and sells on]. Until last year I could send them all to school. This last year the price of fish has gone up beyond my reach. At the shore there are big people who come and take away all the good fish in trucks. The fish catch has come down a lot. This is because most of the fish is caught in double nets by the motor boats and ships. I now send my two daughters to work... I thought I could make a good life for my children in this place... It seems I was wrong.'[4]

So has the women's movement made no difference to Selvi and others like her? The media would certainly have us believe that things are fine for women. We are in a 'post-feminist era'. A Labour Councillor interviewed on British television recently argued against the party's latest policy of interviewing only female candidates for some safe seats in order to increase the numbers of women in Parliament. 'Women are equal now,' she said.

There are moves towards equality. New laws have been enacted to protect women's rights. More girls everywhere are being educated (and even sometimes doing better than boys), women are living longer, and more children are surviving beyond infancy. Access to contraception has increased. There are more women in positions of power – though their numbers overall are still pitifully few. Worldwide, about six per cent of cabinet positions are held by women – up from three per cent in 1987. And of the 24 female heads of state this century, half have been elected since 1990. More women are working – not only in jobs that were specifically designated as 'women's work', but as bus drivers, miners and even priests.

But women are still far from equal. Many working women are stuck in low-paid, part-time work or scraping a living in the burgeoning 'informal economy'. They are still doing most of the housework and

Born to serve: in many places, like this village in the Kharga Oasis in East Sahara, the relationship between men and women has changed very little.

AMEDEO VERGANI

childcare as well – in studies of 17 less-developed countries, women's work hours exceeded men's by 30 per cent. And data from 12 industrialized countries found that formally-employed women worked about 20-per-cent longer hours than men.[5]

Even the positive changes are under threat as powerful factions stress the return of women to their 'proper sphere' – the home. Sometimes this is couched in terms of religious duty: 'Raising children is a blessing from the Lord, and I can't imagine a home without the mother being there,' says Nancy Tucker, a 'stay-at-home mother' in an American fundamentalist magazine.[6] At other times, it is phrased amid dire warnings of societal demise if women continue to try and 'have everything'. The fact that men already 'have everything' is considered irrelevant.

In fact, life at home for many women still means drudgery, even violence. Domestic violence remains common, and rape within marriage is only just being recognized as a crime in a few countries. In the US, a woman is beaten every 18 minutes and domestic violence is the leading cause of injury among women of reproductive age.[7] There is violence outside the home too, as fundamentalist movements attack women and wars subject them to the loss of family and home or even to rape and torture. According to Amnesty International: 'If doing nothing can put women in danger, then becoming actively involved in fighting repression can seal their fate. When women stand up as lawyers, trade unionists, grassroots campaigners or human-rights activists they seem to pose a particular threat to the status quo as well as to the government they oppose.'[8]

So what has feminism achieved? Is it dead, killed off by poverty and lack of tangible achievement? Certainly, the women's movement has not led to a less violent world, nor (as yet) has it meant much change in the way men behave. Its main impact, as British writer Joan Smith points out, has been 'the change it has brought about in female consciousness'.[9] This seems to be true wherever you look in the world. Women still find themselves in impossible situations but because they are now more aware of their relative position in the world – and of the support they can get from other women – they are *reacting* differently.

This is especially true in the Majority World. And even truer for poor women, who have all three of the elements necessary for action: they have a clear agenda; they have other people in the same situation to act with them; and they have nothing to lose. As Nandini Azad of the Working Women's Forum (WWF) in India put it, 'poor women can be rich too' – rich in solidarity and rich in clarity of thought. 'We had to stop sobbing about SAPs (structural adjustment programmes) and *do* something,' says Nandini. And what they have done is remarkable. The Workng Women's Forum has mobilized 280,000 women throughout India in a range of programmes from credit banks to training workshops.

Hard hats and hard facts - more women are working, but mainly in part-time, low-paid jobs.

EVE ARNOLD / MAGNUM

'Most of the women,' explains Nandini, 'are poor – really poor. Around 89 per cent work in the informal economy – as street vendors, landless labourers, or *beedi* (local cigarette) makers. But they try to use the economic situation as an opportunity rather than viewing it as a disaster. Lakshmiamma, a lace-maker in Narsapur, gave a talk to the other women recently. She gave them some sound advice: "I do not know enough to give you advice but I can give you a message that my President gave me when we started to organize the women lace-makers. The rich will always help the rich. The poor will therefore have to help the poor. Reach out to the poorest wherever they are and help them to help themselves... Then you will succeed..."'

This kind of radicalization has gone hand in hand with the feminization of poverty. Poor women are often radical women.

But radicalization can happen for personal reasons as well. While feminism has become a negative word for many young women, there are some who are still proud to claim it as their own. As part of the preparations for the Fourth World Women's Conference in Beijing I attended a workshop on 'intergenerational dialogue' in New York. The group of young women I was sitting with were discussing the differences between their generation and the previous one.

'If you call yourself a feminist it means you are crazy.' The dark-haired woman sitting next to me leaned towards the others to emphasize her point and the rest of them nodded. 'The image we have of the older women's movement is that it was dominated by white, middle-class women.' 'Calling yourself a feminist today,' said another, 'means you can get totally harassed.'

The speakers ranged in age from fifteen to their early twenties. The first came from China, others from the US, Canada and Kenya. They were all adamant that 'feminism' had got itself a bad name. But they were also clear that the things the movement had struggled for had by no means been won and that they themselves had much to fight for, albeit in a different way.

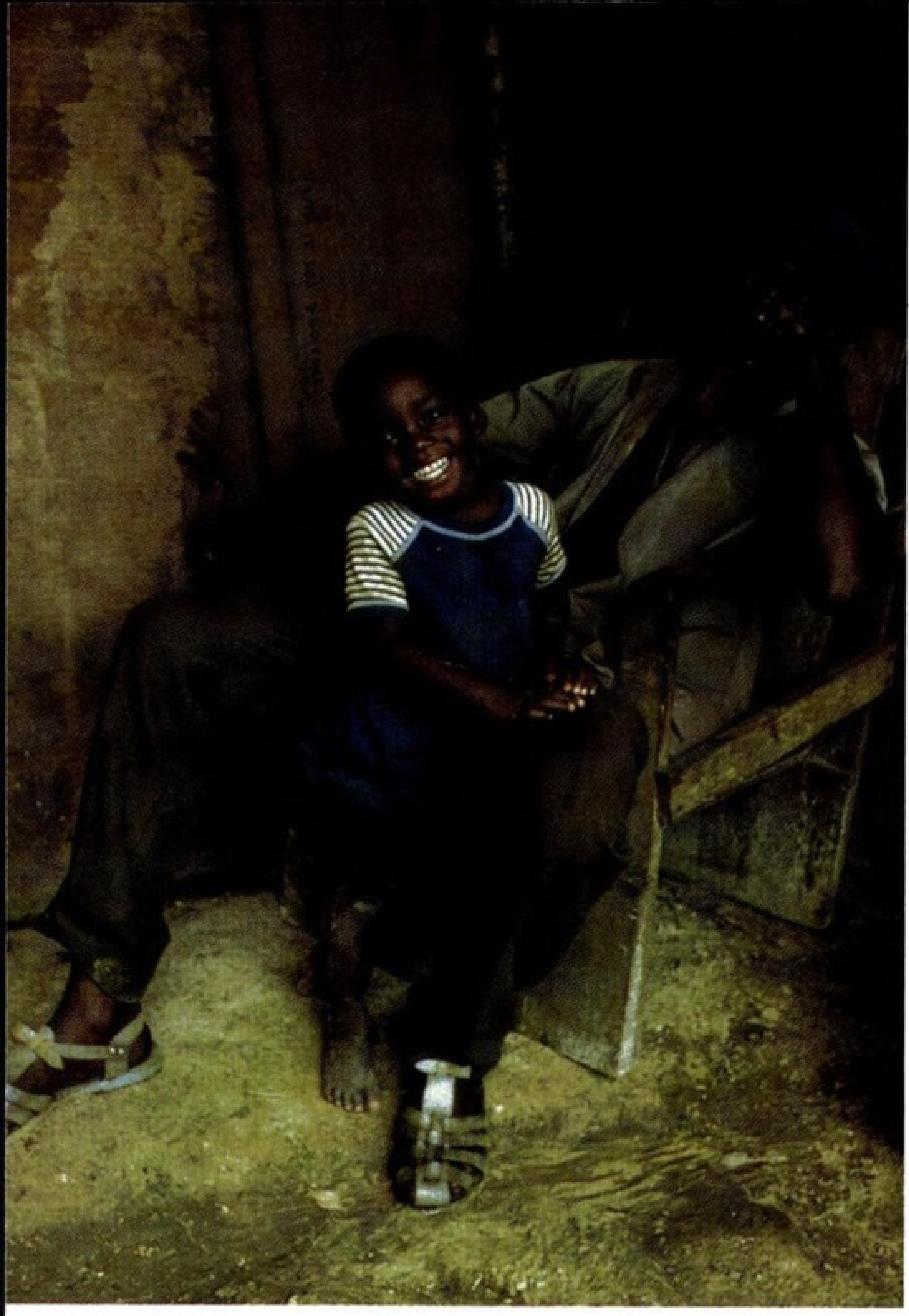
The other main difference they noted was that they did not define themselves in opposition to men. 'Because of the gains made by the women's movement in the US we take a lot for granted,' said Leba. 'And that makes it harder to see the male structure we are part of.' 'That's true,' agreed Rini, 'but we can talk to men – not all men, but some. And that is important. We need to deal with men if we are going to get anywhere.'

Rini had put her finger on one of the crucial differences between the feminism of ten or even five years ago and the young women of today – between what they call the 'second' and the 'third' waves of feminism. While feminism – or 'the F-word' as Julie Parker and Amy Richards call it in their article on Page 24 – as a concept has remained much the same, younger feminists are more ready to talk to and work alongside men.

'We are in the middle of an historic change in relations between men and women...'

In a publication for *Demos*, an independent think-tank in Britain, Helen Wilkinson pointed out that 'We are in the middle of an historic change in relations between men and women: a shift in power and values that is unravelling many of the assumptions not only of 200 years of industrial society, but also of millennia of traditions and beliefs.'[10]

In this new and still-developing



Above: Delighted with dad – fathers need to spend more time with their children. Below: 'Poor women can be rich' – a gathering of the Working Women's Forum in India.

paradigm, men are no longer the enemy, although male structures and patriarchal thinking are still the major agents of repression. This has been recognized at a number of levels. By and large, the word 'gender' rather than 'women' is now used in the context of change and of any analysis of society. Thus 'Women in Development' has become 'Gender and Development', on the understanding that just working on women's situations is not going to make a difference, whereas working with men and women is.

Joyce Umbima campaigns in Kenya on behalf of girl-children, who, she says, still face a huge amount of discrimination. 'Even when you are born there are fewer celebrations for a girl than for a boy. If you are a boy, there is lots of feasting and joy. If you are a girl, people just keep quiet.' The tools she now uses to effect change include workshops for men and women together. 'We try not to be confrontational. We ask them "Can we develop economically if we are not pulling together?" And "How much time do you spend with your children?" We begin to look at the time fathers spend with their sons and we find it is very little. So we ask them: "If you have high hopes for your son how can you shape him if you spend no time with him, if you say childcare is a woman's task?" And in some places men will say "You are right. We had not thought about it."'

But inevitably, there is also resentment from men. As Christine Bradley, who has campaigned against domestic violence in Papua New Guinea, puts it: 'Women's development threatens male authority. Although this is seldom openly acknowledged... the position of women exists not in a vacuum but in relation to the position of men. Eliminating discrimination against women is another way of saying eliminating discrimination that favours men. Not surprisingly, men don't like this. And where men hold most of the power, what men think has serious consequences for women.' [11]

This issue is global as well as local. Interestingly, one word which remained unresolved for a long time in the documents for the Beijing Conference was 'gender'. It is less threatening to male-led governments to consider 'women' as a separate category than to acknowledge that it is the relationship between men and women that is crucial. As Joyce Umbima shows, the only way of bringing men on board is to show that change is in their interest. And this will take much time and much persuasion.

One public face of this persuasion is the Women's Conference in Beijing. With 30,000-plus attending, it will be the biggest international gathering of women ever held anywhere. And the potential agenda is nothing short of revolutionary. Supatra Masjid, of the NGO Forum that parallels the main government conference, called it 'a movement for the twenty-first century that will transform the world'.

Percentage of women-headed households, 1990 [12]

Caribbean	35
Developed regions	24
Latin America	21
Eastern Asia	21
Sub-Saharan Africa	20
South-eastern Asia	18a
Oceania	17
Southern Asia	13
Northern Africa	13
Western Asia	12b

a Hong Kong and Republic of Korea only
b Israel and Kuwait only.

I spoke to Peggy Antrobus, one of the founders of DAWN (Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era), a Third World feminist network at the forefront of research into women's issues. 'What matters is that we are dealing with a social movement. The heightened awareness of women's issues around these conferences helps to build a movement which operates not just at global but at national level – and it is the work at national level that is going to make the difference.'

Dame Nita Barrow, who organized the NGO Forum at the Nairobi Women's Conference in 1985, was quite clear about this: 'Back home is the only place that actions really count.'

The Beijing Conference has been riddled with problems, from its siting in China through a host of political debates around abortion, gender and human rights. But governments are still likely to emerge from it having promised to improve women's position across the board. A real commitment to defeating Z59.5 will take much more than fine words or pretty intentions. What is certain is that the women's movement – ever-changing but still very much alive – will be in the forefront of the campaign to make it happen. ■

PHOTO TOP: H GRUYAERT / MAGNUM; BOTTOM: WORKING WOMEN'S FORUM

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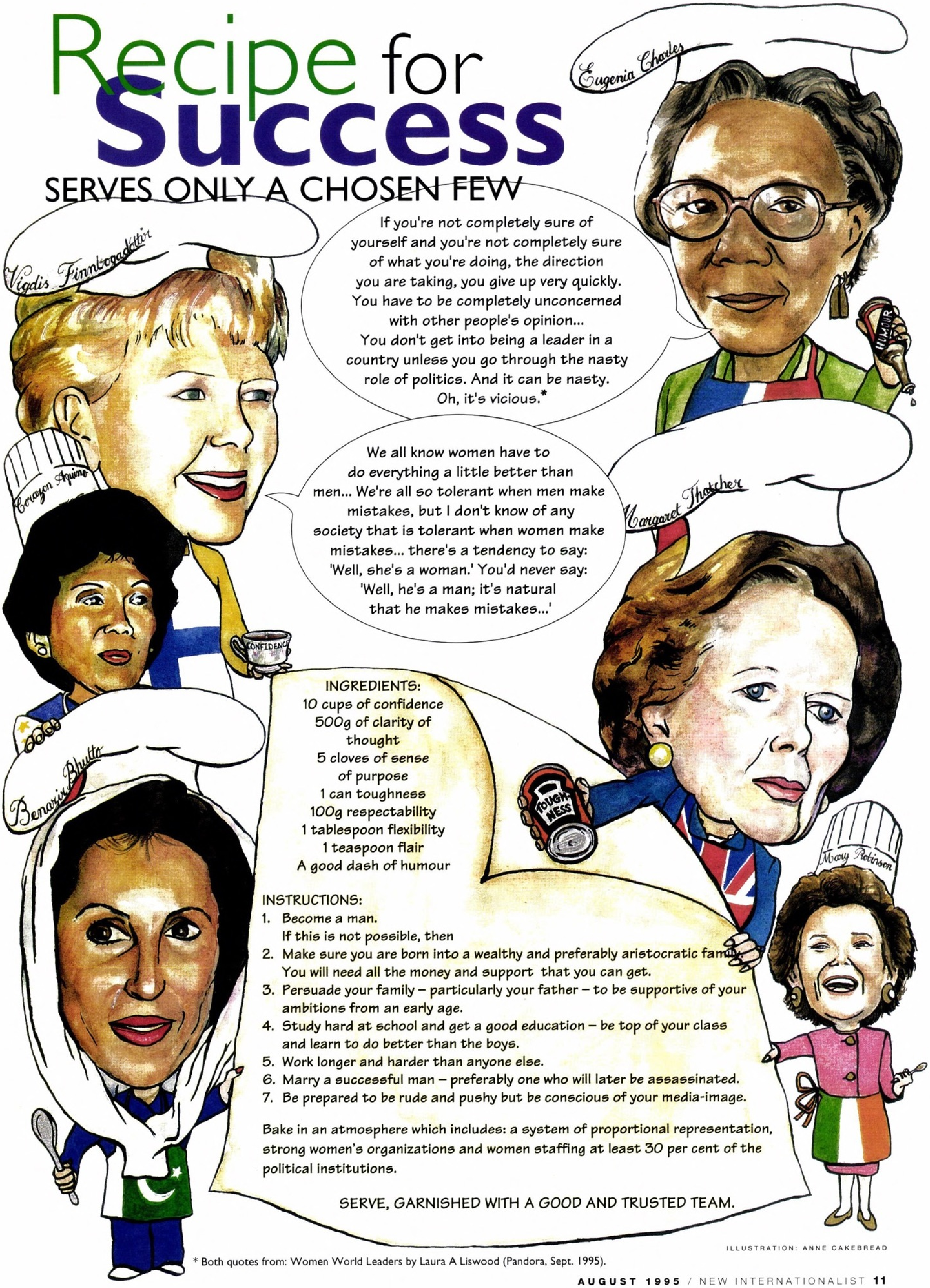
1 *The World Health Report 1995 Bridging the Gaps,* WHO, Geneva, 1995. **2** 'On women and poverty in developing countries' – a paper by Dr Idriss Jazairy of ACORD, 1995. **3** *Mortgaging Women's Lives: Feminist Critiques of Structural Adjustment*, edited by Pamela Sparr (Zed Books, 1995). **4** *Groots* (Grassroots Organisations Operating Together in Sisterhood – South Asia), Vol 2 Issue 5. **5** *Progress of Nations 1995,* UNICEF. **6** *Fundamentalism and Gender* edited by John Stratton Hawley (Oxford University Press, 1994). **7** *Families in Focus,* a report by the Population Council, May 1995. **8** *'Women's* Rights, Human Rights', *Amnesty* Issue 73, May/June 1995. **9** *The Backlash: the Undeclared War Against Women* by Susan Faludi, (Chatto & Windus 1991). **10** *No Turning Back: Generations and the Genderquake*, by Helen Wilkinson (Demos, 1995). **11** Written for this magazine. **12** *The World's Women* (UNDPI 1995).

Recipe for Success

SERVES ONLY A CHOSEN FEW



If you're not completely sure of yourself and you're not completely sure of what you're doing, the direction you are taking, you give up very quickly. You have to be completely unconcerned with other people's opinion... You don't get into being a leader in a country unless you go through the nasty role of politics. And it can be nasty. Oh, it's vicious.*

We all know women have to do everything a little better than men... We're all so tolerant when men make mistakes, but I don't know of any society that is tolerant when women make mistakes... there's a tendency to say: 'Well, she's a woman.' You'd never say: 'Well, he's a man; it's natural that he makes mistakes...'

INGREDIENTS:

10 cups of confidence
500g of clarity of thought
5 cloves of sense of purpose
1 can toughness
100g respectability
1 tablespoon flexibility
1 teaspoon flair
A good dash of humour

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Become a man.
   If this is not possible, then
2. Make sure you are born into a wealthy and preferably aristocratic family. You will need all the money and support that you can get.
3. Persuade your family – particularly your father – to be supportive of your ambitions from an early age.
4. Study hard at school and get a good education – be top of your class and learn to do better than the boys.
5. Work longer and harder than anyone else.
6. Marry a successful man – preferably one who will later be assassinated.
7. Be prepared to be rude and pushy but be conscious of your media-image.

Bake in an atmosphere which includes: a system of proportional representation, strong women's organizations and women staffing at least 30 per cent of the political institutions.

SERVE, GARNISHED WITH A GOOD AND TRUSTED TEAM.

ILLUSTRATION: ANNE CAKEBREAD

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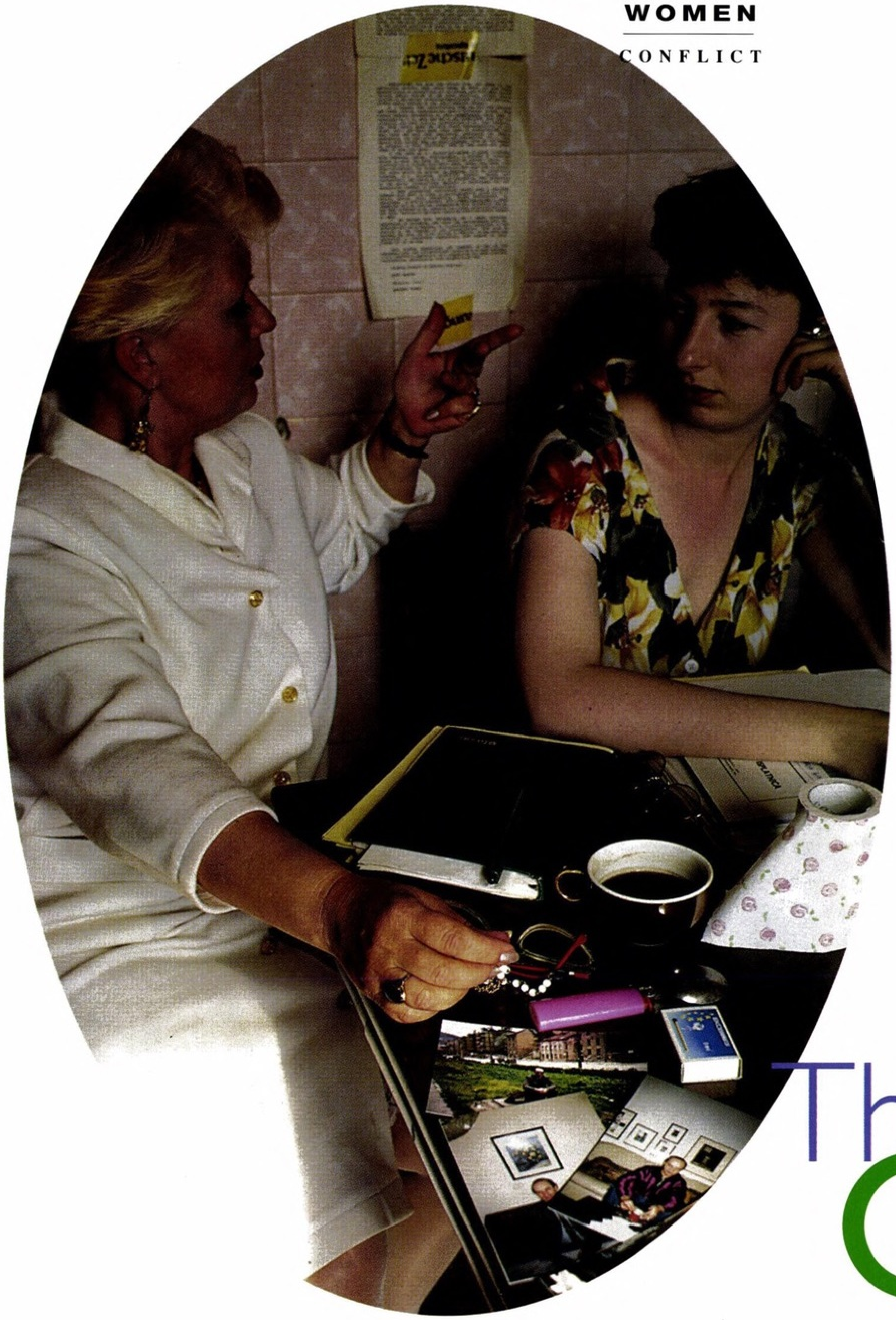
* Both quotes from: Women World Leaders by Laura A Liswood (Pandora, Sept. 1995).



Amid the desert of the war in former Yugoslavia, **Rada Boríc** finds a new identity.

The Oasis

BOTH PHOTOS: CHRIS STEELE-PERKINS / MAGNUM

'I'm from Zagreb. Croatia.'

'Croatia?'

'One of the countries of former Yugoslavia.'

'Oh. Well, what has really happened there?'

'I can't tell you. I can tell you only of the things written on women's bodies and souls...'

Often, meeting foreigners, I could see in their eyes a blink of astonishment, sympathy or a wish to help. To ease their worried minds I used to tell them that we hardly know all the 'hows and whys' but that every day we are more and more aware of the 'whats' of our war.

War. It doesn't only destroy houses and property and kill beloved ones. It wipes out entire landscapes of personal histories. Families are separated, friends have gone missing or are cast all over the world.

We are all born with the assumption that no-one will do us any harm on purpose. At least not our neighbours.

Was it a mere nightmare? What is this war about? 'Ethnic cleansing'? Who needs burnt-down villages? They fight for what? To devastate and then possess? To possess a house where some other life has been led? To have good dreams there?

When the first refugees came from Bosnia some were placed in carriages in an old railway station from which trains no longer leave. A young girl, still a child, was washing train windows while two younger sisters cried in their grandmother's lap. Both parents had been killed. She was making a home for them.

Lost identity. White plastic bags with all belongings. Old yellowish document, a few photographs...

I work in the Center for Women War Victims. Or rather 'War Survivors'. War has changed my life as it has changed many.

Now we talk about times 'before the war'. 'Before the war' I was a professor of Croatian Language and Literature at the University of Helsinki in Finland. I was a visiting lecturer at Indiana University in the US. Only then it was Serbo-Croatian and Yugoslav Literature. I had started work on a Croat/Finnish dictionary. It made no sense once the war had started. Work in the Center enabled me to see the world through the eyes of refugee women.

I'm Mirsada from Sarajevo holding my husband's cut head in my lap during the shelling of the town. I'm Ruza from Derventa. I buried all my valuables under the plum tree in my garden, hoping to go back but now I'm waiting for a refugee visa from Canada. I'm Mara, taken from hospital to a Serbian camp. I'm Alija from

Prijedor with my forged passport going to Sweden illegally with my two little children. Their father, my husband, is missing. I want to start a new life. I'm Badem, hushing my daughter in the tram, hushing her so that the other passengers won't recognize that we are Bosnians.

I'm all of these women. I remember my friend Eve Ensler, a playwright from New York, saying that everyone should, if nothing else, be a refugee for a day. To feel the loss. To understand. To share. In a refugee camp you can still feel part of a community. Outside, you are lost in a society which does not care.

My work in the Center is my runaway from the New Reality. I am facilitating self-help groups for refugee women, trying to help them regain control over their lives. What about my life? Did I not need to regain control, to find identity – women's identity?

These women fled from Bosnia or occupied Croatian territory with their children and parents, hoping that once they reached Croatia they would be safe. And now, after all the atrocities they have witnessed, after all the traumas and all the resettlements, they face new problems.

Women and children make up 80 per cent of refugees. Jobless, their identity card entitles them to primary health care and primary schooling. Only the primaries. There are too few places in the refugee camps, no money to pay for decent shelter. But they struggle. This is why I need to identify with them. They know how to survive.

Take my friend and colleague Biba, 52 years old, a successful lawyer from Sarajevo who came to Zagreb with her daughter Dunja. There is no legal work for refugee women so Biba must try to find any work to feed herself and her daughter. She is Muslim by birth. Her husband, a Serbian, stayed behind working for the Bosnian Government. The family had never cared for nationality issues. But others did, and imposed their beliefs on the rest. To enable Dunja to go to secondary school Biba had to have her baptised a Catholic. To be Catholic means to be Croatian. The rest are 'foreigners'. Before the war Biba used to come to Zagreb often. It was painful suddenly to be a foreigner, a refugee, in a town you considered your own.

So Biba will move to Canada. There is no future for mixed marriages in Bosnia. No possibility of becoming a Croatian citizen. Biba works with other refugee women in the barracks. She sings. She encourages them. She is cheerful. To start a new life when you are 52 is to be a survivor.

I live in an oasis of caring refugee women – a place which is focused on helping them to be who they were or are. And I learn life's wisdom from them as we prove every day that women do not share hatred for each other. But outside in Croatia a parallel society runs on.

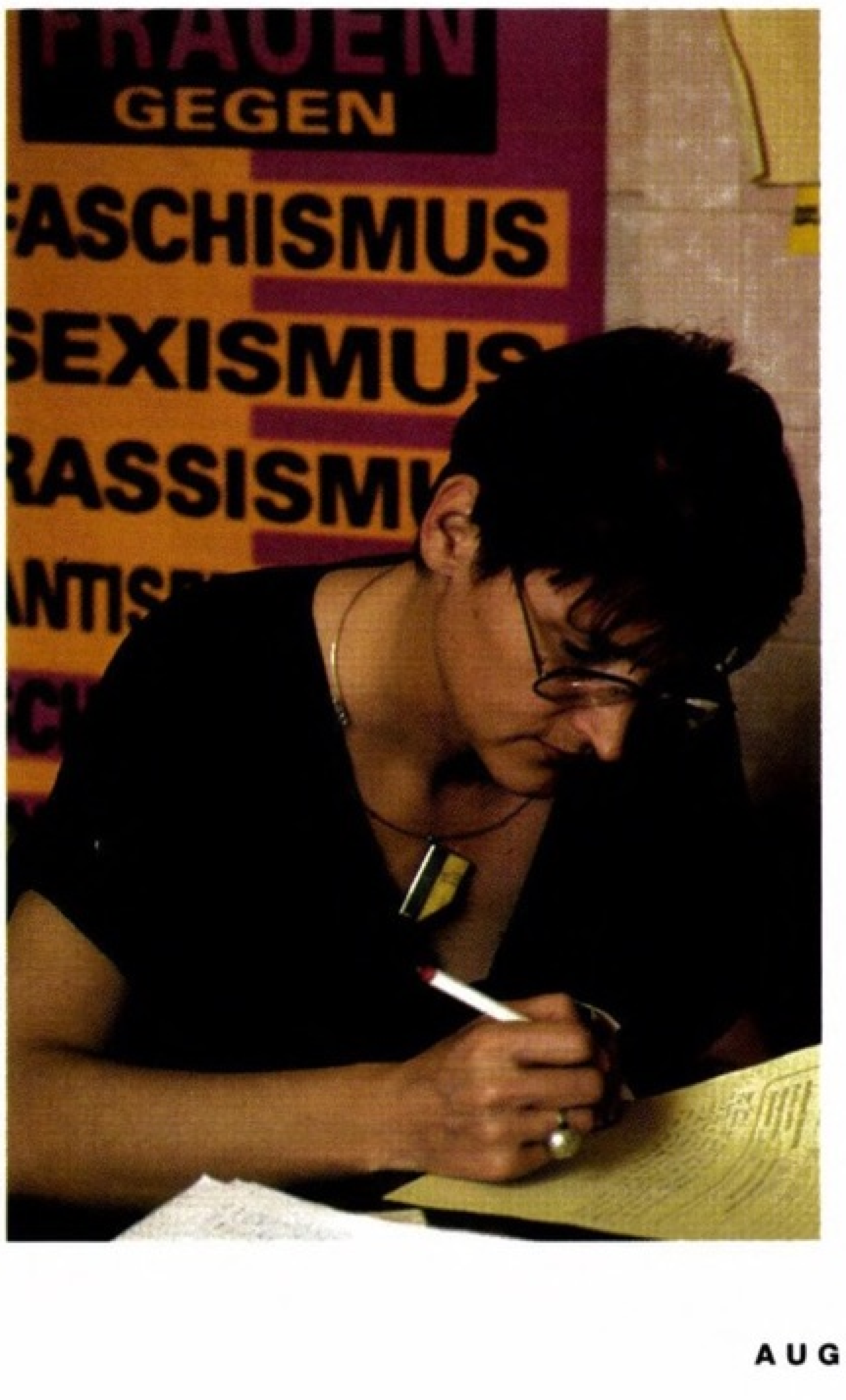
Ordinary women struggle for everyday life. To make ends meet on low salaries. To keep families together. There is no time for political engagement. While we are struggling to improve our everyday lives, strong patriarchal structures are deciding our fates for us. War proved to be a good excuse for sending women back into the home. Today, only a few women are in our Parliament. And even these often find themselves without a voice.

While statistics show that the majority of university students are women, everywhere else is disaster. We do not participate in decision-making, or in the peace negotiations... though we would know how to negotiate.

Croatia is balanced between war and peace, between nationalism and democracy. It is a young country suffering from a child's disease. Here, national is more important than civil. Women are fit for motherhood only. There is a new family law which seems to give some benefits but is in fact a trap for working women. Lots of pro-life and Catholic organizations are working to change reproductive rights and make abortion illegal. The Church has more influence than ever, preaching a new moralism while the State profits from the war.

They say it is the same in all the countries 'in transition'. Women are being transported backwards. We are losing the rights we took for granted under socialism.

Coffee and comfort in Zagreb: refugee Biba (left, in white) and author Rada Boríc (below).



Then we had political egalitarianism. Sometimes this was a formality but there was legal and economic equality; there was equal status in marriage and the right to abortion; there was almost full employment. True, the public sphere was sexist and there were hidden violences against women at work and in the family. But the new democratic state based on national sovereignty has brought more catastrophic effects.

'...everyone should, if nothing else, be a refugee for a day. To feel the loss. To understand. To share...'

It has meant a return to traditional patriarchal images of women as mothers and wives. The 'homeland mother' is a role created by the new Demographic Movement in order to increase the national birth rate. It threatens women. Reproductive rights are no longer women's rights but national rights.

Women have disappeared from public and political life. They form a majority of the unemployed. So-called 'liberalization' has brought with it open pornography, semi-legal massage parlours and illegal prostitution. When the soldiers come marching home, domestic violence increases – as does alcoholism.

No-one wants to talk of these things. Only women know what they mean. But when they speak of them they are attacked as a 'national threat' or denigrated in Parliament.

Many new women's projects have been created in Croatia since the war began. And women from the countries of former Yugoslavia have stayed in contact with each other. No military tactic or manufacture of hatred could eliminate this decision to remain in solidarity with women on the 'other' sides. Women's groups from Croatia are in touch with similar groups from Bosnia, Serbia and Slovenia, re-building bridges destroyed by politicians. Women are proving themselves to be promoters of peace and builders of civil society.

As women we are organizing because this is the only way to make our issues visible. We want to be activists, not passive victims. In all this nationalistic euphoria it is easy for me to choose my nationality: Woman. It is not enough to 'look at the world through women's eyes' (as the Beijing Women's Conference says). We must make the world a reflection of women's minds and women's efforts. ■

Rada Boríc works at the Center for Women War Victims in Zagreb, Croatia. The Center has been awarded two prizes for peace activism and for working with women regardless of nationality.

ABBAS / MAGNUM

Women on the edge of time

The forces of the extreme right are everywhere on the march – and the women of Algeria are fighting to contain them. Their challenge is also ours, according to **Mahl** (who uses a pseudonym for her safety).

An Algerian woman writing about Muslim fundamentalism for a Western readership comes up against two big problems. First, the rise of the extreme Right in Europe – and the subsequent Islam-bashing – makes it hard for us to know quite how to denounce fundamentalism to foreign audiences without giving fuel to those who demonize Muslims. Inside Algeria we are able to wage a struggle against fundamentalists with great clarity of judgement. But as soon as we go abroad, whether as emigrants or political refugees, we experience a schizophrenic sense of betrayal of our own people and start defending some of the values and politics that we were fighting against within our country.

Second, the cowardly Western Left, for fear of being accused of racism, fails to recognize in Muslim fundamentalism the seeds of new fascisms. In this process they unwittingly work hand in hand with fundamentalists in the construction of that new demon to replace the now-buried 'Red' – 'The Muslim'.

Fundamentalists promote not only their version of 'Muslimness', but also impose on us all a single forced identity at a time in history when we would rather stand for our multiple identities of gender, class, race, nationality, politics and so on. In the same way many in the Western Left fail to acknowledge that a significant percentage of people born in Muslim countries and communities may not accept religion to be an essential marker of their identity. In ex-Yugoslavia, 'Muslim' has even become a nationality. No-one seems to question this.

Muslim fundamentalism is not a religious movement but a political one. And religion is only one of the means fundamentalists use to gain power – they also use culture and ethnicity to divide people. All these movements have little to offer in terms of political and economic programs; their focus is on identity and subsequently on women who are seen as the guardians of identity, of cultural and religious values, of the purity of the blood. The control of women is therefore essential to fundamentalist politics, as Ali Belhadj shows: 'The natural place for a woman is at home. If we live in a true Islamic society, the woman is not meant to work. So, she would not leave her home, and devote her life to the grand mission of the education of men. The woman is the reproducer of men. She does not produce material goods, but this essential thing that is a Muslim.'[1]

The Muslim fundamentalist credo is separate development for men and women – a policy which, in South Africa, when applied to blacks under the name of apartheid, was condemned by the international community. The implications of this for women in Algeria make it imperative that we speak out, whatever the difficulties.

In Algeria, separate development started

Penned in: women in Algeria find their daily lives constrained and their very lives threatened.

during the liberation struggle. Contrary to the myth that women were equal partners in the war, recent studies have shown that female freedom fighters were kept in subordinate positions in the political movement and totally marginalized in the liberation army.[2]

Shortly after independence discriminatory practices in education and jobs were introduced, together with legal discrimination in relation to the family. Since then, under three successive presidents, attempts have been made to pass a new, repressive family law. The first attempt was made only a year after independence, and the law was finally passed in 1984 – 21 years later. By this law, Algerian women lost their right to contract marriage – we now have to be given in marriage by a *wali* (tutor). We lost the right to initiate divorce (except in very rare and specific circumstances); only men can divorce and they can do so unilaterally (repudiation); polygyny (men's right to take more than one wife) is now legalized; fathers are the sole guardians of children, and women have an unequal share in inheritance.

For the first 20 years after independence, Algerian women kept silent about the abuses and discriminations they were suffering. They internalized the Government's priorities: that women's demands were to be considered only after the liberation, after reconstruction, after socialism, etc... When they tried to speak for themselves, women were made to feel guilty of betraying and dividing the people.

Then, in the 1980s, they started taking action against a new planned extension to the Family Code. By so doing, they started the first of the social movements which were to shake Algeria. At the end of the 1980s, after a series of riots by young people afflicted by illiteracy and unemployment, the Government was forced to abandon the one-party system which had governed Algeria since 1962 and to allow political parties and associations to be legally registered. In no time some 60 women's organizations sprang up countrywide. However, most of them were affiliated to political parties and highly dependent on their parties' priorities.

The first independent women's organization, the Independent Association for the Triumph of Women's Rights, was set up in the late 1980s. It demanded the abolition of the Family Code. In 1980 and 1982, 100 women took to the streets. In 1984 there were 300. In 1989 there were 5,000 and in 1990 more than 10,000 – representing one-third of demonstrators against fundamentalism. One of the slogans they have started shouting since 1991 is: 'No dialogue with the fundamentalists!'

Meanwhile fundamentalist organizations were also legalized and benefited from 'international' fundamentalist funding for their activities. They quickly invaded and then monopolized the field of social welfare which was happily abandoned to them both by the regime, which had never catered to these needs, and by the Algerian Left, which was interested in political revolution and not 'charity'.

Women's organizations too concentrated on politics; it took them years to realize that they also had a role to play in the day-to-day relief of their oppressed sisters. Organizations such as shelters for women, associations for the defence of unwed mothers and women's co-ops are extremely recent in Algeria. Unlike charitable organizations in Europe, they are highly politicized and aware of the political dimension of their relief work.

One of the worst legacies of 'specific socialism' (Algeria's isolationist version of the creed) has been the distrust towards the global women's movement and of progressive and human-rights organizations. Among the consequences of this separation from the outside world was the inability of Algerian women to link the rise of Algerian fundamentalism with the situations of women in other parts of the Muslim world, especially Iran. It is only recently that slogans shouted in demonstrations have reflected a new awareness, as on 25 October 1993: 'Algiers will not become a Kabul', 'Algiers will not become a Tehran', 'Algiers will not become a Khartoum'.

In the fundamentalist camp, by contrast, they developed a global project from the start. Young Algerian men were trained in other Muslim countries to come back and fight for fundamentalist groups. Moreover the first two fundamentalist parties set up in Algeria – the FIS (Islamic Front for Salvation) and Hamas – were inspired by laws and practices which were unheard of in Algeria, such as stoning to death for

Hearts and homes

Hindu fundamentalism – **Hindutva** – is on the upsurge. **Ratna Kapur** and **Brenda Crossman** analyze the attraction of the movement for women.

'MEN AND WOMEN are equal but they are not the same,' according to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Its policies emphasize the ways in which women are different from men, reinforcing along the way the sexist stereotypes that have contributed to inequality. For example, the BJP support policies that emphasize women's roles as mothers and wives (maternal health care) while rejecting policies that go too far beyond these traditional roles for women (compensation for housework). 'Women who want to become men,' says one BJP member, 'and want to make other women (like) men are worthy of ridicule.'

R RAI / MAGNUM

Why are women attracted to this fundamentalist and communalist agenda? Part of the answer is that it affirms their identity as mothers and wives. The fundamentalist groups have all created particular programmes, organizations and roles for women. For example, the female wing of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) is designed to promote 'virtues' such as devotional attachment to the ideals of Hindu womanhood. This religious and renunciatory model has made it possible for women such as Una Bharati and Sadhvi Rithambhara [both BJP MPs who urged on the Hindu fundamentalists who destroyed the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya in 1992] to occupy such prominent positions.

Yet these organizations bring women out of the family in ways that do not fundamentally challenge their traditional roles. They are careful to ensure that the power of the (male-headed) family to make decisions regarding its members, particularly its female members, remains unthreatened. A family's decision for a woman to marry trumps her own decision to participate politically.

Since the destruction of the Babri Masjid, feminists and other secularist forces in India have talked of little else but how to meet this challenge and defeat the right-wing, fundamentalist agenda.

The women's movement has a particular challenge. It has often been (mis-)understood as attacking and belittling women's traditional roles. It is important, indeed essential, that feminists address this sense of alienation felt by women for whom there has been little or no choice about being mothers and wives. The women's movement must continue to find ways to include such women and provide them with the same sense of self-worth as do the fundamentalists. It is only by offering women real choices that we can begin to meet the challenges of *Hindutva*.

Adapted from 'Women and Hindutva' in *Women Against Fundamentalism*, No 5, 1994 Vol I.

adultery and cutting off the hands of thieves.

The fundamentalists' struggle for power in Algeria took a dramatic turn at the beginning of the 1990s with the creation of armed wings of the political parties, such as the GIA (Armed Islamic Group). Facing Government repression, they turned to terrorism and started killing the intelligentsia and women. Women were denounced in mosques by imams and *fatwas* were pronounced against them, condemning them to death. Lists of women to be killed were pinned up at the entrance to mosques. Fundamentalists tried to enforce the veil (not even the traditional one but the Iranian *chador*) and burnt down schools. They firebombed popular areas and democratic demonstrations: they shot and slaughtered people who did not share their views. They justified sexual slavery through the institution of *muta'a*, or temporary marriage. This is a Shi'a practice aimed at disguising prostitution and short-term affairs, imported from Iran and Afghanistan and learned in the fundamentalists' training camps. From Nazi Germany to Vietnam, ex-Yugoslavia to Rwanda, history has given us other examples of how such practices brutalize society and have a direct impact on the increase in organized crime and domestic violence.

Women in Algeria are at the forefront of the struggle to win democratic rights. It is a question of life and death for them. In 1992 when the FIS was nearly elected, women were the first to call on the Government to stop the elections. It was women who clearly spelt out the difference between ending the electoral process and ending the democratic process, and questioned the democratic value of electing a Hitler. In the Muslim world, Algerian women are among the very few who call for the separation of religion and the State.

But they pay a high price. Insecurity is constant and leaders of women's organizations have been in hiding for the last two years. Two leading figures of Algerian feminism have recently been killed.[3] And it is not just the courage of these political leaders which should be saluted but also that of women going about their everyday life. Despite orders from the fundamentalists and regardless of the threat to their lives, women still go outside their homes, they still go to work, still mostly refuse to cover their heads – and they still send their children to school, even though fundamentalists threaten to execute children going to state schools. They never know if their beloved ones will come back home or not. Living 'normally' in today's Algeria is already an act of resistance. One can be executed just for doing that. ■

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[1] Ali Belhadj in *Horizons*, Feb 23 1989. [2] Djamila Amrane, *Des femmes dans la Guerre d'Algérie*, Paris, Karthala, 1994. [3] In February 1995 Nabila Djahine, of the feminist organization *Cri de Femmes.*, was assassinated.

God's guerrillas

The Christian Right in the US has just unveiled a new 'Contract for the American Family'. **Mallika Dutt** assesses what it really means for women.

I RETURNED from a vacation in India recently to discover that my friend had been shot by an anti-abortion terrorist. She worked as a counsellor at a Planned Parenthood clinic in Massachusetts. A man called John Salvi walked into the clinic and started firing. He killed Sharon Lowney, the receptionist, and shot my friend and several others waiting in the reception area. He then went a few blocks down the road and repeated his performance, killing another receptionist, Leanne Nichols. Salvi was finally arrested in Virginia outside another clinic where he was preparing to shoot again.

I had watched the increasing violence against health-care clinics with a sense of alarm. The bombings, arson and killings of doctors who perform abortions revealed the growth of a Christian fundamentalism whose terrorism against women knows no bounds. But my awareness of this phenomenon didn't prepare me for the shock of coping with my friend's bullet-wounds. As she struggles to make her mind and body whole again – with one bullet inside her for life – I am constantly reminded that she was lucky because she wasn't one of the women who died. When I listen to the rhetoric of the Christian Right, I often think of her and wonder at the hypocrisy of those who kill, maim and wound in order to 'protect life'.

The Right's obsession with sex education and abortion is its most visible effort to obtain control over women. For them reproduction is integrally connected with God and the propagation of the race. Men can only have control over this by controlling women's sexuality. Thus, one of the provisions of the new 'Contract with the American Family'[1] calls for the protection of the rights of states not to fund abortion.

CA'S HOLOCAUST
RTION

DONNA BINDER / FORMAT

The Right has already made significant strides in its anti-abortion crusade by placing severe restrictions on abortion funding in federal and state legislation; by terrorizing doctors and clinics that perform abortions; and by harassing women entering clinics – like the one where my friend worked – that provide them. The language is as fiery as the actions. 'Planned Parenthood,' says Pat Robertson, 'is teaching kids to fornicate, teaching people to have adultery; teaching people to get involved in every kind of bestiality, homosexuality, lesbianism – everything that the Bible condemns'.[2]

This combination of intimidation and terrorism has proved effective in narrowing women's access to abortion even though the majority of the country supports women's right to choose whether or not to carry a pregnancy to term.

As with all fundamentalisms, the Christian Right's call for the restoration of the American family is based on certain assumptions about the role of women in society. The very definition of 'family' assumes a male and a female married to each other who play patriarchally-defined roles regarding child-rearing and wage earning. Pat Robertson again: 'The feminist agenda is not about equal rights for women. It is about a socialist, anti-family political movement that encourages women to leave their husbands, kill their children, practice witchcraft, destroy capitalism and become lesbians.'[2]

Robertson's crudeness nothwithstanding, the sophistication of the Right's approach should not be underestimated. It has developed an analysis, a strategy and a range of policies that target the core of US social, cultural and political life, with far-reaching implications for women's human rights.

One of the Contract's provisions, for example, calls for 'a constitutional amendment to protect the religious liberties of Americans in public places.' In the US, separation of the Church and the State has been one of the cornerstones of the constitution. The Contract's attempt to undermine this separation is part of its overall strategy to enable religion (read Christianity) to be more closely intertwined with Government policy and to enable the Christian Right to proselytize in classrooms and other public places.

The separation of church and state has been critical for women, because the advocacy of any religion by the state would result in policies and practices based on religious prescriptions about gender roles that are often harmful to women's interests. The state can be held accountable for its discrimination far more easily when it does not have divine sanction for its actions.

The Contract also aims to dismantle the Department of Education and transfer its funds to families and local school boards. The Right has long been unhappy with sex education that does not promote abstinence, a secular school curriculum that does not teach 'creation' as the beginning of life, and multicultural education that is 'anti-Western'. As Pat Robertson put it, the 'public education movement has also been an anti-Christian movement...We can change education in America if you put Christian principles in and Christian pedagogy in. In three years, you would totally revolutionize education in America.'[2]

The Right has always understood the importance of controlling the hearts and minds of young people in order to shape society. The ability to manipulate people's homophobia, racism, and sexism has won it many victories over defining the school curriculum, even when elected officials have supported progressive multicultural education.

Other provisions of the Contract call for changes in tax policy to assist traditional families and homemakers; the reversal of US ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child; and the restriction of pornography on the Internet and cable television. It has also called for the privatization of those arts which promote a broader moral view of the world than they would support, and of legal services to the poor, which they argue promote divorce and single parenthood.

Neither this analysis nor the Contract's demands are new. They reflect long-held tenets and are issues around which the Right have been organizing for the last 20 years. But the last decade has seen an unprecedented growth in their power in the US. Religious fundamentalism has demonstrated a canny ability to move into the political vacuums created by government corruption, by the breakdown of community and family, and by the anxieties of a fast-changing, technologically driven world.

In addition, the victory of the Republican Party last November relied heavily on the organizing ability of the Christian Right. The Republicans will now have to satisfy the demands of this constituency – especially in the light of the upcoming Presidential race.

Unfortunately, women's movements have not risen to the challenge – except in the area of abortion. Progressive organizing in the United States is fragmented and divided by issue and identity. Different groups organize around reproductive health, welfare, violence, worker's rights, education, labor, prisoners, children, tax reform and so on. These groups are further divided by gender, race, sexuality, class, immigrant status and ethnicity. Each of these entities have made some gains in their own area, but few coalitions and alliances have sprung up unless their backs are against the wall.

The Republican victory and the implementation of its Contract with America have galvanized and united many groups in opposition. However, this cannot be an answer to the sophisticated and holistic approach of the Christian Right. What gives the Right its power is a clear vision of the kind of society it wishes to create. In a time of political, moral, spiritual and economic bankruptcy, women's movements in the US need to articulate a clear vision for the future – a vision that moves beyond victim-based or single-issue agendas. The protection and promotion of women's human rights can be guaranteed only if we meet this challenge. ■

Mallika Dutt is the Associate Director of the Center for Women's Global Leadership. She would like to thank Deevy Holcomb and Dolores Alexander for help with this article.

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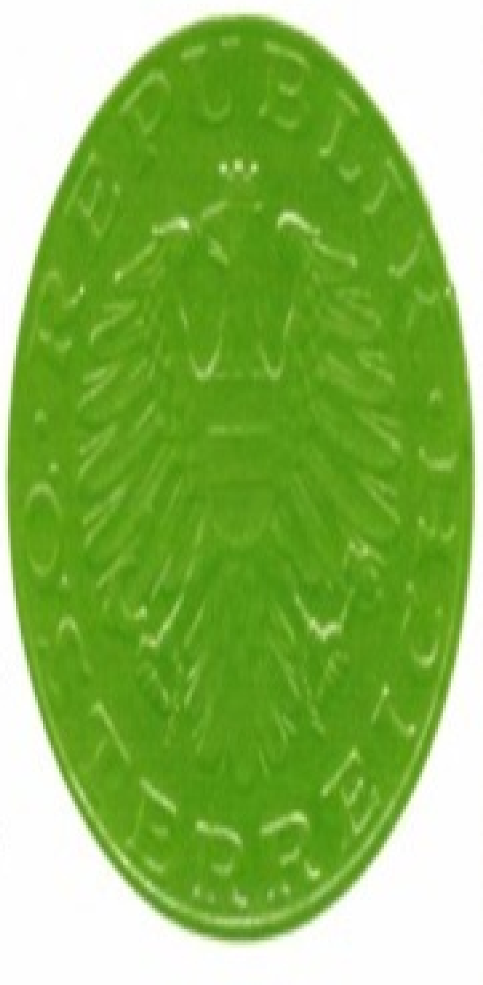
[1] The Contract is the brainchild of the Christian Coalition, with 1.6 million active supporters and an annual budget of $25 million. The Coalition is a repackaged version of Pat Robertson's political base and ideology led by Ralph Reed.
[2] From a compilation by 'People for the American Way'.

Heads or tails?

THE FACTS on WOMEN



Statistically speaking, there have been many improvements to women's lives in the last ten years. Female life expectancy is up, more girls are going to school, more women are working, new laws exist to protect women's rights... But the positive statistics often have a corresponding negative – and the gap between women North and South is widening.

LIFE EXPECTANCY

Women are living longer than they used to (and so are men). Over the past 20 years average life expectancy has increased from 71.0 to 74.6 years in 'developed' regions, and from 54.5 to 62.4 years in 'developing' countries.[1]

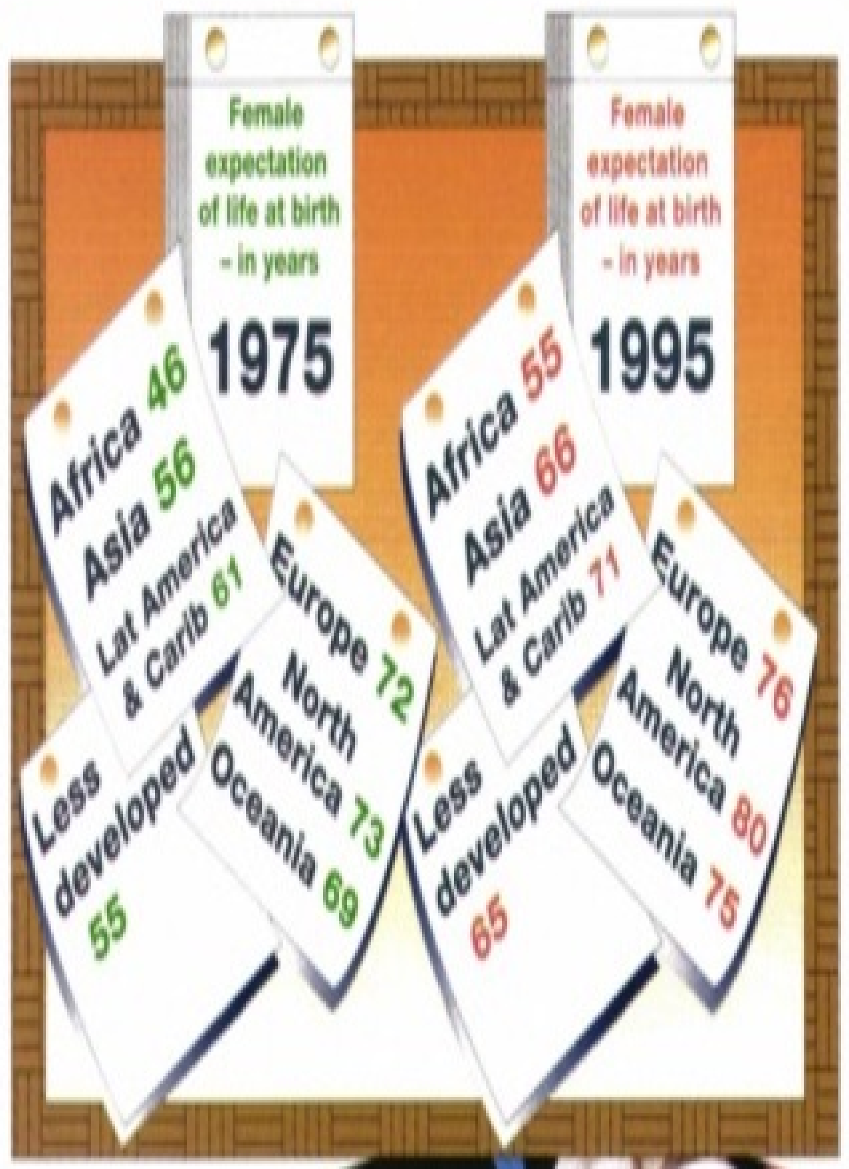
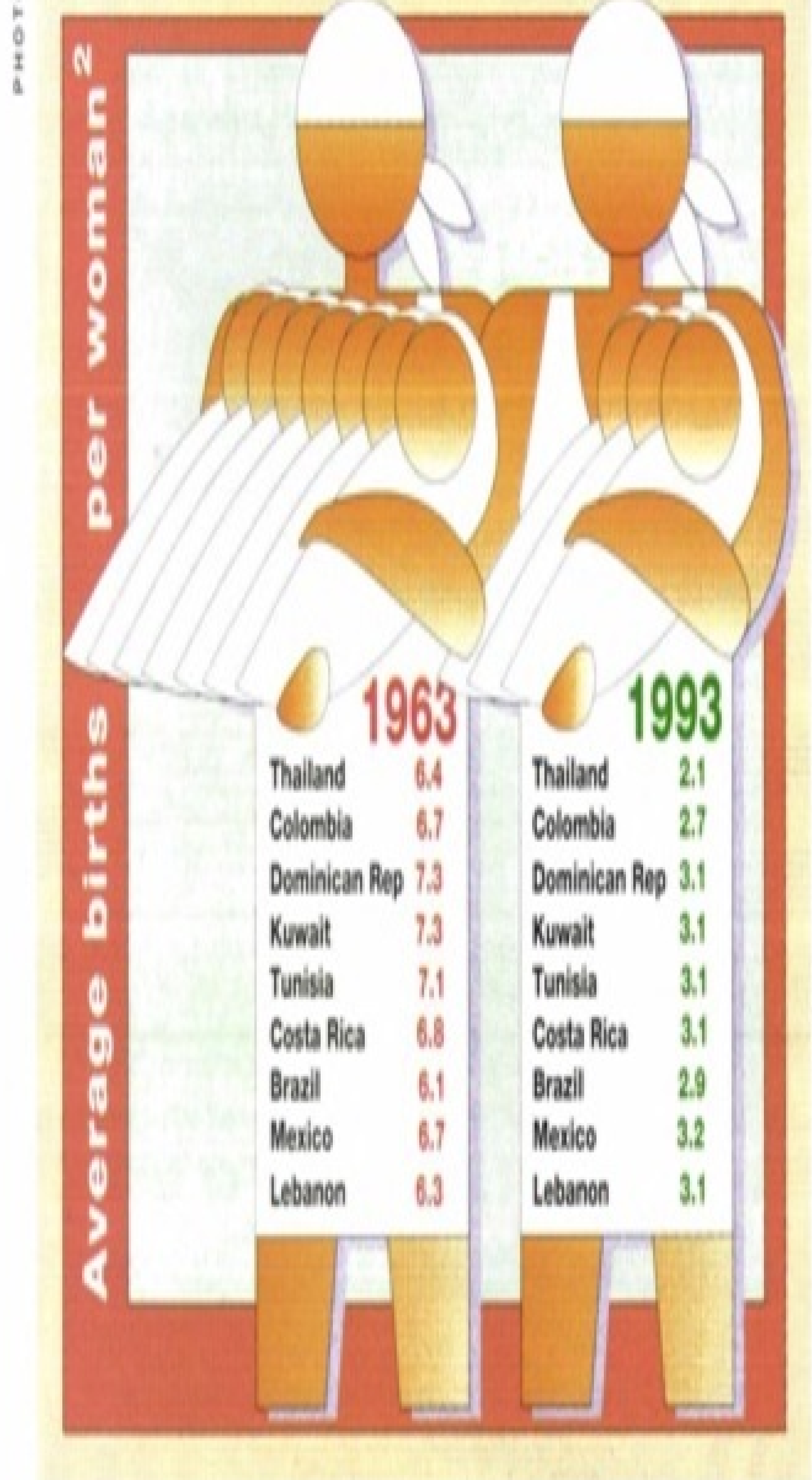


PHOTO: DONNA DeCESARE / FORMAT

HEALTH

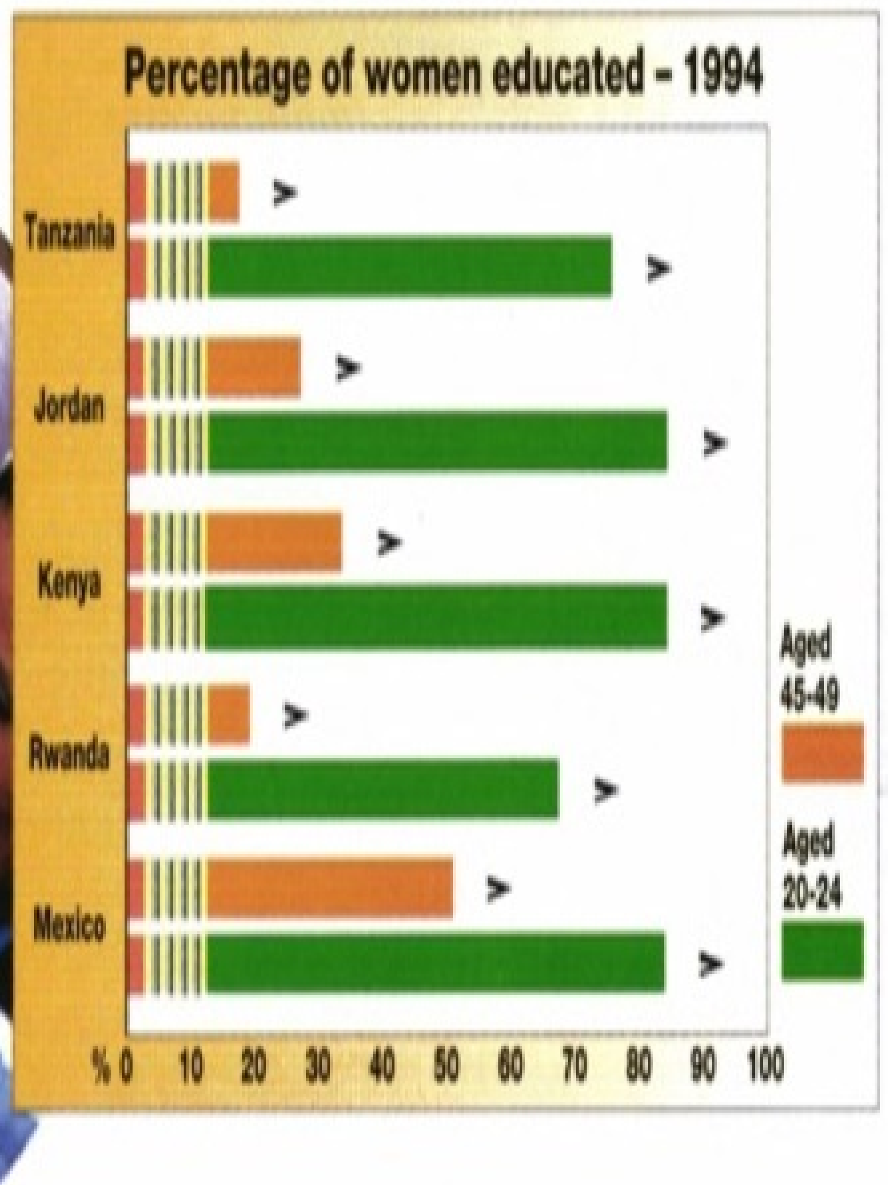
Women everywhere are having fewer children and marrying later. Increased education has a marked effect in improving maternal and family health.

Contraceptive use has increased five-fold since 1965-70, although 350 million couples still lack access to a full range of modern family-planning information and services.[1]



EDUCATION

More women and girls are being educated. Younger women are now more likely to be educated than their mothers. The percentage of women with no formal education has been more than halved in a single generation.[1]



VIOLENCE

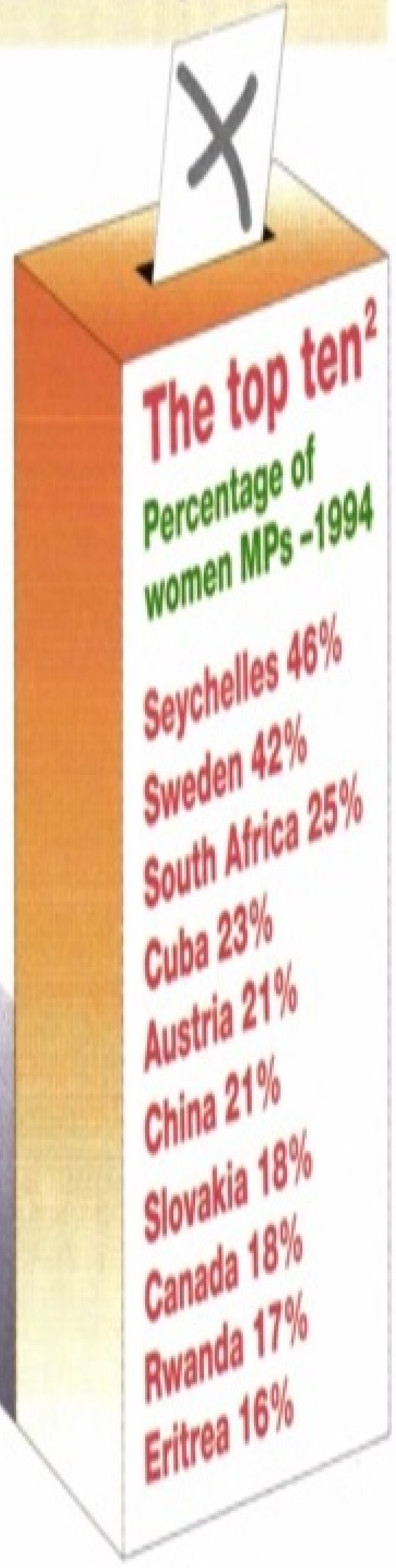
In the past decade violence against women has been recognized as a gender issue. In June 1993 the World Conference on Human Rights recognized gender-based violence as incompatible with the dignity and worth of the human person. In December 1993 the UN General Assembly proclaimed the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women and in June 1994 the Commission on Human Rights appointed the first Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women.

WORK

Women now represent 41% of all workers in developed countries and 34% worldwide. More women are also entering the informal economy – in several countries women now make up 40% of the informal labour force. In Jamaica, Honduras and Zambia they outnumber men.[3]

PARLIAMENT

Half the women elected heads of state or government in the twentieth century have come to power since 1990 – though the total for the century is still only 24. Few countries have more than 10% of women as elected members of Parliament. When they do, it is often because of quota systems, as with the ANC in South Africa.



LIFE EXPECTANCY

Improvements in female life expectancy may be jeopardized by prolonged economic recession, poorly designed structural-adjustment policies, growing environmental health problems and the AIDS pandemic.

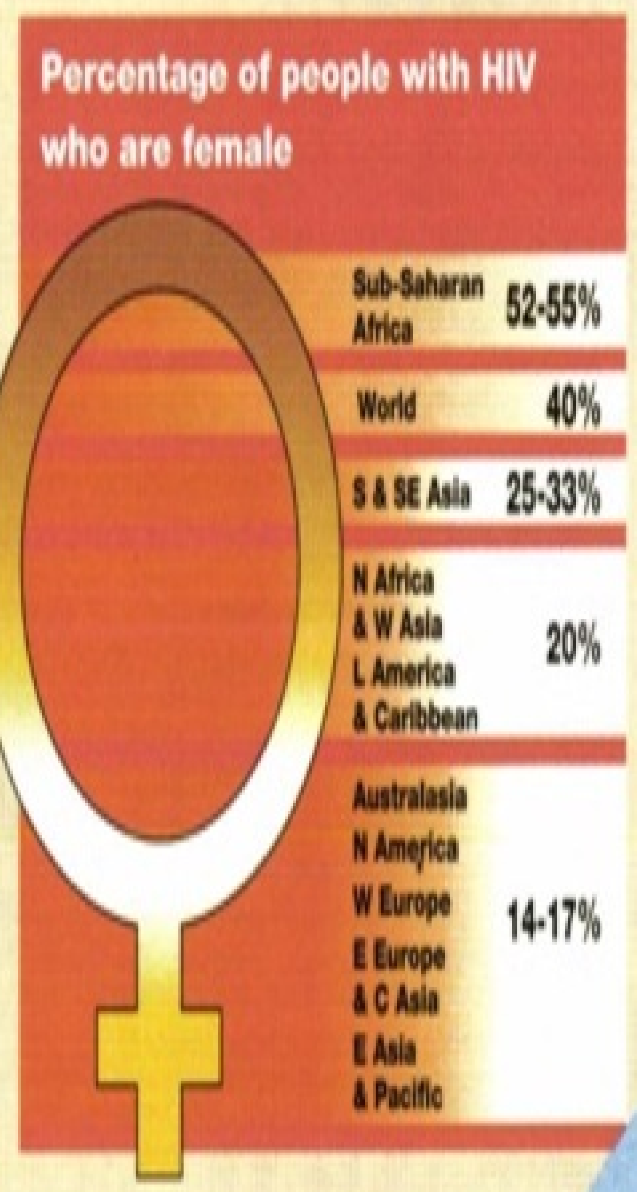
HEALTH

Maternal death rates are 15 to 50 times greater in the developing world than in most developed countries. Half a million women die each year as a consequence of pregnancy and childbirth. Of these deaths, 99% are in developing countries.

At least a quarter of all women have no access to family planning. And many women are still having more children than they would like – one survey showed that in almost half the 20 nations for which data are available, women want at least one child fewer than they did 10 to 15 years ago.[4]

HIV INFECTION AND AIDS

The number of women contracting HIV is growing faster than the number of men. In Africa it is estimated that among ten million people with cumulative infections, more than 50% are now women.[3]



VIOLENCE

- In India, five women are burned in dowry-related disputes every day. Women's groups claim the figure is nearer 25.[5]
- In the US, a woman is beaten every 18 minutes. Domestic violence is the leading cause of injury among women of reproductive age – between 22% and 35% of women who visit emergency rooms are there for that reason.[2]
- In Peru, 70% of all crimes reported to police are of women beaten by their husbands.[5]
- As many as one hundred million women are 'missing' in developing countries – in other words, normal mortality patterns are not present. The infanticide of baby girls and the nutritional neglect of girl children are blamed.[6]
- Rape is frequently used as a weapon of war.
- National studies in 10 countries estimate that between 17% and 38% of women have been physically assaulted by a partner.[3]

WORK

The increase in the number of women at work is due mainly to a restructuring of the whole world of work. 'Male' jobs are becoming increasingly redundant, and many women who work in the formal economy are grouped in part-time, low-paid jobs which are often temporary. Their wages are 30% to 40% less than those of men for comparable work.

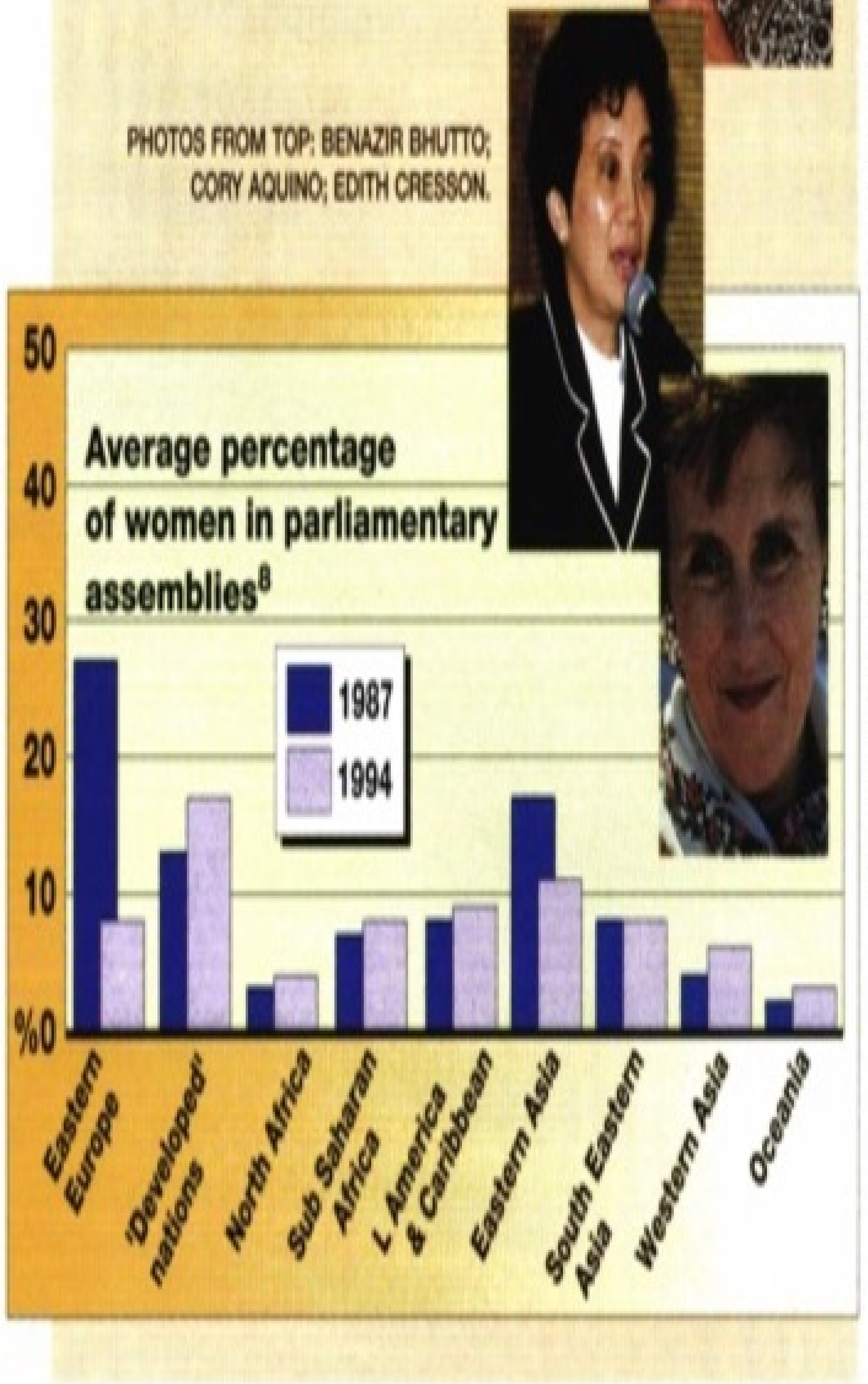
PARLIAMENT

Women's share of seats in the world's parliaments has fallen from 15% in 1988 to 11% in 1994. The total number of MPs in the world is 34,306 of whom 3,737 are women. At the end of 1994 only 10 women were heads of state or government.[3]

In 25 countries in 1994 there were no women ministers or subministers at all.

PHOTOS FROM TOP: BENAZIR BHUTTO; CORY AQUINO; EDITH CRESSON.

PHOTOS FROM TOP: CAMERA PRESS; OLIVER GARCIA / CAMERA PRESS; BENOIT GYSEMBERGH / CAMERA PRESS



EDUCATION

90 million girls still have no education at all – over 75% in Burkina Faso, Burundi, Mali, Niger, Nepal, Pakistan and Yemen and over 50% in Bangladesh, Guinea, Morocco and Senegal. And of the 960 million illiterate people in the world, two-thirds are women.[1]

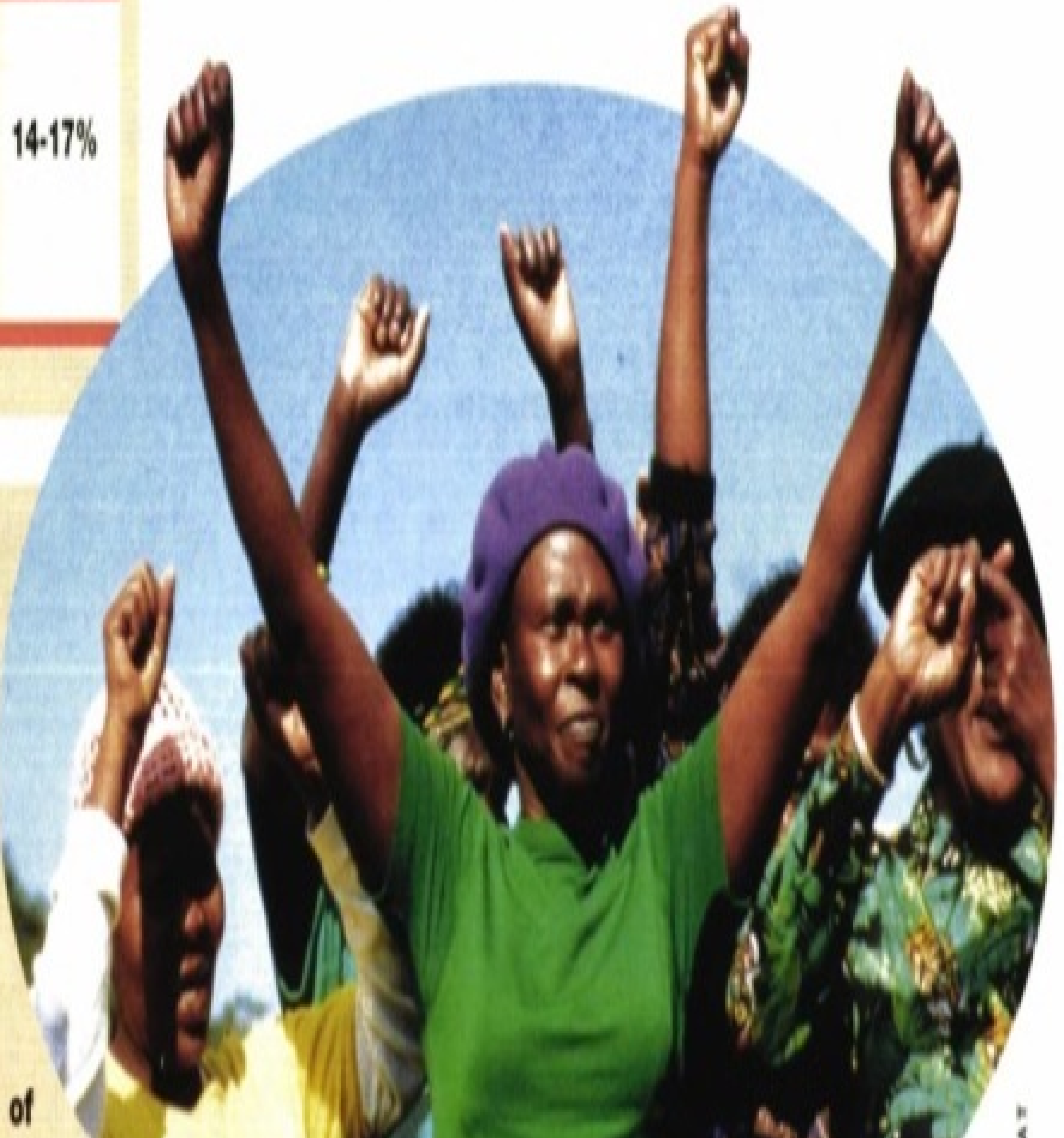


PHOTO: MAGGIE MURRAY / FORMAT

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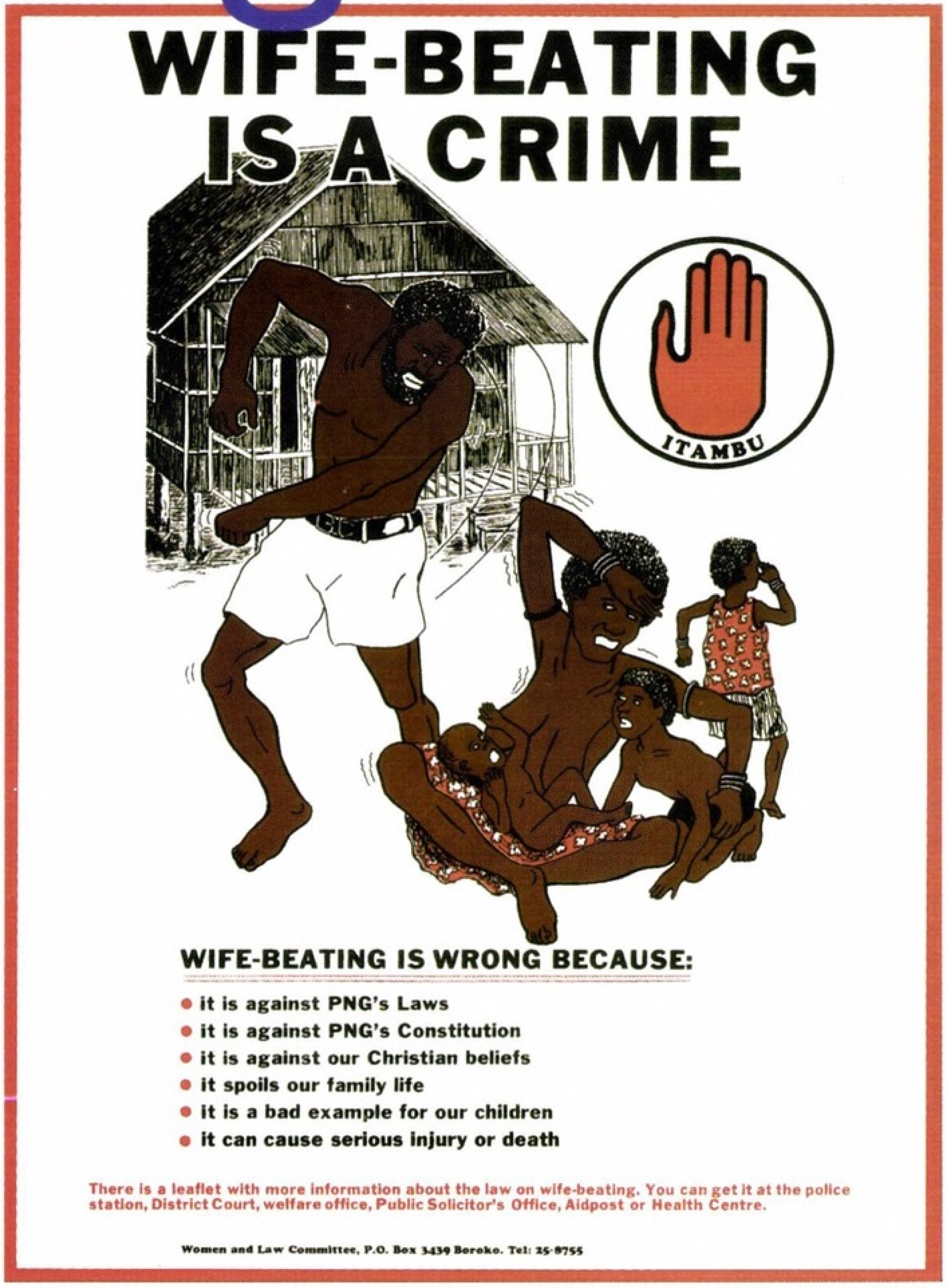
1 *The State of World Population 1995*, UNFPA. 2 *The Progress of Nations 1995*, UNICEF. 3 *The World's Women 1995* (UNDPI). 4 *Families in Focus*, a report by the Population Council, May 1995. 5 *Focus on Women: Violence against women* – UNDPI document for the Fourth World Conference on Women. 6 *Los Angeles Times* June 1993.

Disarming the fist

'We pay for our wives, so we own them and can belt them any time we like,' said the Government minister in Papua New Guinea in 1987. He couldn't say it now. **Christine Bradley** explains why.



WIFE-BEATING IS A CRIME

WIFE-BEATING IS WRONG BECAUSE:

- it is against PNG's Laws
- it is against PNG's Constitution
- it is against our Christian beliefs
- it spoils our family life
- it is a bad example for our children
- it can cause serious injury or death

There is a leaflet with more information about the law on wife-beating. You can get it at the police station, District Court, welfare office, Public Solicitor's Office, Aidpost or Health Centre.

Women and Law Committee, P.O. Box 3439 Boroko. Tel: 25-8755

'DEAR SIR or Madam, I am one of the students in Tari Community School in Southern Highlands Province. Now I want to tell you about my family problem. My father comes and argues and hits my mother and I feel sorry for my mother. Sometimes I don't go to school and I stay with my mother at home. When he sees me that I don't go to school, he comes and hits me. I would really appreciate your help.'

This is a real letter, one of many like it that fattened the files of Papua New Guinea's Law Reform Commission (LRC) after it began its campaign against wife-beating in 1986. Until then, 'wife-bashing' – as it is known locally – was seen as a personal problem, something to be discussed in the tea-breaks at women's meetings, but never put on the agenda and addressed as an important shared concern. Officially, wife-beating was against national law, inherited from Australia. Yet in every town the Monday morning after pay-Friday would reveal a crop of black eyes amongst the female bank tellers, secretaries and supermarket check-out girls, evidence of drunken husbands reminding their wives who's boss. In a famous national court case involving a cabinet minister accused of rape, the fact that he had previously beaten the girl on several occasions was offered as a defence: the beatings 'proved' that he regarded the girl as his wife and therefore could not be accused of raping her (Papua New Guinean wives have no right to refuse sex with their husbands).

In the villages, a husband's right to chastise his wife physically was accepted, with some tribes even recognising this by presenting a stick to the bridegroom in return for the payment of bride-price. The payment of bride-price by a man's extended family to the family of the bride is how a customary marriage is marked in most parts of the country. In the eyes of many Papua New Guineans, it is also what gives a man the right to beat his wife if she displeases him. 'We pay for our wives, so we own them and can belt them any time we like,' was how one Government minister put it back in 1987.

The country is strongly male-dominated, with few opportunities for women in public life. In the 20 years since Independence, for example, there have been only three female members of Parliament and currently there are none. The National Council of Women had no tradition of women's-rights activism, having its roots in the sewing, baking and Bible-study classes set up by missionaries and former colonizers; but it was becoming alarmed at what appeared to be increasing rates of wife-beating. Hearing that women in other countries were organizing against domestic violence, it appealed to the Government for help. The Government responded by directing the LRC to investigate the problem and come up with some solutions. The Commission not only did

PHILIP JONES GRIFFITHS / MAGNUM

A kiss, not a kick: marriage is safer in Papua New Guinea thanks to a major campaign.

this but proceeded to implement most of its own recommendations. And so was born a new social movement.

Since the second UN Women's Conference in Kenya in 1985, when women from all parts of the world began to uncover the full extent of their shared experience of violence, there have been many attempts to tackle wife-beating. PNG is one of the few developing countries – perhaps the only one – to embark on a comprehensive nationwide programme of legal, social and educational measures.

The major effort was concentrated on a massive public-education campaign to try to change attitudes to wife-beating. Joining forces with the Women and Law Committee (a volunteer group of six professional women), the LRC published a series of leaflets and posters and a video called *Stap Easi* (Take it Easy). These explained what was wrong with wife-beating and how beaten wives could get help from the law. Hundreds of thousands of these were distributed nationwide, even in the most remote areas. A young people's theatre group toured villages, often on foot, performing plays about the evils of wife-beating and working with local groups to develop their own plays. National radio participated by broadcasting plays, panel discussions, documentaries, interviews and recordings of training sessions. Local action groups sprang up all over the country, one of which produced a reggae song called *Noken Paitim Meri!* (Don't hit your wife!) that became a smash hit on the national airwaves. Even the Catholic Church joined the campaign, requiring that young men preparing to marry should disclaim any right to beat their wives and granting dispensations for wives to leave husbands who beat them.

In towns, the police policy of not becoming involved in domestic disputes had left women without protection. As a result of the campaign the policy was changed and police began treating wife-beating like any other form of assault, arresting and prosecuting offenders.

Who hits and who's hurt in PNG

	Wives hit by husbands	Husbands hit by wives
Rural average	67%	30%
Urban, high income	62%	50%
Patients treated for domestic violence injuries	97%	3%

• Reasons men give for hitting: sexual jealousy, drunkenness, money problems, wife 'failed in duties'. • Reasons women give: self-defence.

Source: Papua New Guinea Law Reform Commission.

The campaign continued to gain strength until 1991, when civil war, an increasing crime rate, the impact of structural-adjustment policies and other economic difficulties began to impede the work.

There are no statistics to show how effective the campaign has been in reducing the amount of wife-beating or in changing attitudes, but it has certainly succeeded in rolling the ball a long way in the right direction. And all of this, except for legislation, was achieved through the voluntary co-operation of thousands of individuals, as many men as women, against initial opposition from the nation's highest body. One MP's response to the LRC's first report was: 'We are wasting our time instead of discussing the development of the country. We should have something better to discuss than this!'

Domestic violence is not an issue in PNG alone. Exactly the same thing happened in Canada's Parliament in 1984 when a woman MP calling for a discussion on domestic violence was met with laughter and ridicule. Researchers in the US estimate that a quarter of the population still think it's acceptable for a husband to hit his wife in some circumstances. In Canada, studies show that at least one in eight women currently suffers from domestic violence, and one in four women experiences some form of sexual abuse in her lifetime.

Development itself can be a link in the chain of stress and violence. Rapid social change sweeps away centuries-old ways of doing things, creating stress and insecurity. Women still have motherhood, but men have lost the traditional sources of their manhood. In PNG many women have noticed that their husband's violence against them increases when their husbands are out of work, and at the start of the school year when husbands have to find the money for the children's school fees. The wives of smallholders in rubber and oil-palm development schemes reported being beaten by their husbands when the prices for those commodities fell on the world market.

Women who are afraid of their husband's violence cannot make any decisions for themselves, cannot attend meetings or participate in development activities, cannot prevent their husbands from taking their earnings and spending them on drink, cannot control their fertility, cannot further their own education or advance their own or their family's situation in any meaningful way. Wife-beating has high economic costs in terms of work-hours lost, and of medical, legal and other services provided to victims. It helps create a high level of violence in society, leads to family instability and keeps women in their place as second-class citizens under men's control.

It is this last point which is perhaps the most damaging. When women are forced to endure the humiliation and pain of male violence against them, they experience themselves as weak, vulnerable, helpless, inadequate and afraid. Even those women who have not been beaten themselves are intimidated by the knowledge that they could be. There is an urgent need for governments and development agencies to recognize wife-beating as a serious problem affecting and affected by development, and to provide resources to deal with it. Because as long as women are made to *feel* inferior by men's violence against them, they will never achieve their full potential – as people or as agents for development. ■

Christine Bradley is a social anthropologist who has spent 11 years in PNG, including 5 years running the Law Reform Commission's programme on violence against women. She now lives in Canada.

Simply... Storming the citadels

Men still rule the world. Contrary to popular myth, women have gained very little over the last ten years – and lost a lot. But they are not giving up. This year, in the run-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women, activists from all over the world have prepared their own 'platforms for action' – action that will, if it is carried out, chip away at the monoliths of male power.

POVERTY AND WORK

Women are getting poorer. Economic restructuring is happening everywhere and has affected women in particular because cuts in government spending have been mainly in so-called 'social' areas of health, education and welfare and other public services.

WOMEN CALL FOR:

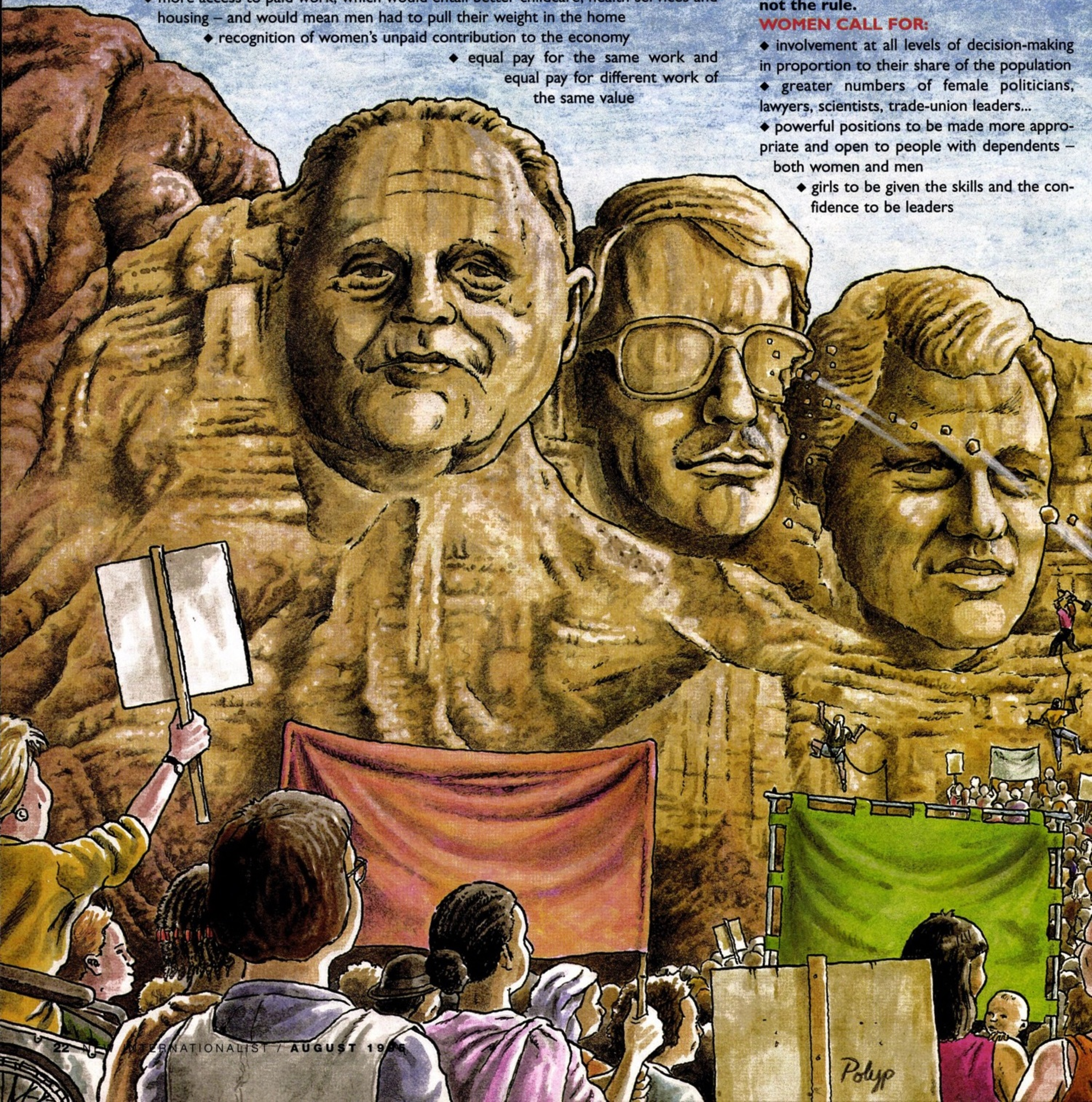
- a 50-per-cent reduction in the numbers of people living in extreme poverty by the year 2000
- a change in adjustment policies to take more account of human need
- access to land, capital and credit on equal terms with men
- more access to paid work, which would entail better childcare, health services and housing – and would mean men had to pull their weight in the home
- recognition of women's unpaid contribution to the economy
- equal pay for the same work and equal pay for different work of the same value

POWER

Although some women have managed to become directors of companies, judges, and even prime ministers and presidents, they are still the exception and not the rule.

WOMEN CALL FOR:

- involvement at all levels of decision-making in proportion to their share of the population
- greater numbers of female politicians, lawyers, scientists, trade-union leaders...
- powerful positions to be made more appropriate and open to people with dependents – both women and men
- girls to be given the skills and the confidence to be leaders



HUMAN RIGHTS AND PEACE

Women suffer from violence both at home and in society at large. Whether physical or mental, this prevents them from exercising any of their rights.

WOMEN CALL FOR:

- ◆ a non-violent society, educating boys when they are young that violence is not acceptable, and promoting a more just and equal society
- ◆ all governments to ratify CEDAW (The Commission on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women) and any national legislation which allows discrimination against women to be repealed
- ◆ the elimination of traditional practices that impede the health, well-being and development of girls
- ◆ legislation which categorizes family violence as a crime and which recognizes rape and sexual violence in times of conflict as war crimes
- ◆ all kinds of sexual abuse, from child abuse to forced prostitution, to be made illegal and the perpetrators tried and punished

HEALTH AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

While women in most countries live longer than men, they are more likely to suffer ill-health throughout their lives. Half a million still die each year as a consequence of pregnancy and childbirth and many more die young, worn out from bearing too many children.

WOMEN CALL FOR:

- ◆ access to adequate and affordable healthcare
- ◆ the right to refuse early marriage and to choose the number and spacing of their children
- ◆ family planning to be affordable, available and acceptable to all – men as well as women
- ◆ more and better health education
- ◆ men and women to know about and be able to practise safe sex

EDUCATION

Educating girls is not only valuable in itself – it also improves maternal and family health and promotes better living conditions. Yet girls are still not getting as much or as good an education as boys. Around 90 million girls are still denied access to primary schooling and 600 million women make up two-thirds of the world's illiterates.

WOMEN CALL FOR:

- ◆ girls to have equal access to education, including free and compulsory basic education and the same chances as boys for secondary and further education
- ◆ educational materials to be aware of gender issues
- ◆ effective literacy programmes aimed at women
- ◆ women and girls to be shown by the media in active roles

ENVIRONMENT

Women are the first victims of environmental destruction and have been in the forefront of environmental campaigns. At the same time those with few resources have had no option but to deplete their immediate environment in the interests of their own and their families' survival.

WOMEN CALL FOR:

- ◆ a ban on the dumping and import of toxic and solid wastes
- ◆ a halt to nuclear testing and the production of nuclear weapons
- ◆ investment in renewable energy resources
- ◆ inclusion in decision-making processes on environmental issues
- ◆ education of rural women about alternative sources of energy which reduce women's work while protecting the environment

Sources: Summaries of the regional Platforms of Action (governmental and non-governmental) for the Fourth World Conference on Women by the Feminist Majority.

ILLUSTRATION: © J. POLYP

NIKKI VAN DER GAAG

The F-word

Feminism has become a dirty word for the generation in their twenties. **Amy Richards** and **Julie Parker** explain why.

AMY: There is an assumption that the 'twenty-something' generation is lazy, apathetic and irresponsible. Much of this grew out of the media's characterization of 'Generation X'. Recently I was sitting through a meeting with older feminists and the question arose 'What is happening with young women?'. Even though my hand was raised – and I was one of only five young women sitting around the table – no-one looked to us for input. It is discouraging to have it happen in the media, but downright disheartening when it happens in your own backyard. I was left assuming that older women fear the confidence young women have and are somehow threatened by what we have accomplished at an early age. Do they really think young women have forgotten their struggle? We have not – but I know that as much as we have to embrace their history, we have to pave our own path.

Although it took me 20 years to identify myself as a feminist, I know that my feminism has always been with me. I remember being angry that the girls' soccer team had to wear the boys' old uniforms while the boys got new ones; that I was usually one of only two or three females in my advanced math and science classes; that, until I got to college, I had read five plays by Shakespeare and had never read or learned about Alice Walker, Zora Neale Hurston or Virginia Woolf and the only glimpse I got of women's experiences in the US was through a 'Social History' class.

The final push came when I was in the safe community of a women's college, surrounded by women who weren't afraid to identify themselves as feminists. By accepting the label, I felt better about myself and was determined to help other women come to this realization. I was no longer afraid of the F-word.

Julie: I don't think I ever acknowledged the acute gender inequalities that exist in this world until I travelled to Morocco, the summer before my senior year in college, to work on a community relief project. For the first time, I was denied the right to go for a walk on my own, forced to be escorted by several males each time I tried to venture out to explore. I felt cloistered and oppressed. This experience was the catalyst for me to embrace my own brand of feminism. Since then, I have tried, sometimes in vain, to make everything I do woman-centered, to somehow channel my energies, enthusiasm and resources towards creating a more balanced world.

Amy and Julie: It is thanks to our foremothers that a gender consciousness has been awakened in many young women and men today. The first wave of feminism began to swell more than 150 years ago with the abolitionist and suffragist movements. The second wave of feminism has been working toward equality for the past 30 years. While the first wave secured basic rights for women – like the right to vote and the right to own property – the second wave defined specific injustices, such as domestic violence, incest, illiteracy, the lack of reproductive rights and equal pay for work of equal value.

A third wave of feminism has now come along to continue their work. And there is still much to be done. Although progress has been made since then – a few women have cracked through the glass ceiling and some now have access to safe and legal abortions – other areas remain static. In the unglamorous and poorly-paid world of pink-collar jobs (waitressing and childcare), the majority of workers are women. Violence continues to await women in their homes and on the streets.

In most instances, young women's issues – welfare, violence, access to safe and affordable birth control to name a few – are similar to those of our older sisters. Yet they affect us in different ways and sometimes to a greater extent. In the US, for instance, one in five girls is sexually abused before reaching the age of 18; 40,000 teenage girls drop out of high school each year because of pregnancy and women under 30 represent one-quarter of today's homeless.

Although the issues facing the second and third wave are similar, sometimes we differ in our approach and our expectations. Because we grew up in the wake of the second wave, we were afforded more opportunities and feel entitled to want and ask for more. As Barbara Findlen, the 30-year-old executive editor of *Ms* magazine puts it: 'The more justice you think you can achieve, the more you try to achieve it.'

Our generation in the US is also wont to take certain rights and opportunities for granted. Many of us can't remember what it was like before Roe versus Wade (the 1973 US Supreme Court case that legalized abortion) or when a woman was expected to stay home at the expense of her career. Today we can get a legal abortion or we can have a child; we can be a teacher or a Supreme Court Judge; we can have the job of our choice and even have a husband who stays home and raises the children.

We have grown accustomed to having options and in many cases don't know the struggle that went into obtaining these basic rights and the pressure needed to keep them available. We are less likely to embrace a project, movement or event that is not truly representative of our generation. We ask why there are no women of color involved or why, if they are doing an article on 'young feminism,' they are only interviewing 'older feminists', or why foundations who support projects for youth don't have young people on their boards. We do this because we want to be involved in a movement that speaks our language and addresses our issues as young women.

The third wave of feminism was birthed at a point in the movement where men's inclusion became necessary for us to carry the movement forward. Much of the organizing of the second wave took place in women-only groups. This was necessary for women to have a voice and to express their experiences. Now that women have found their voice and have established a platform for a women's movement, we know that we will not be truly equal until men change too.

By definition, feminism is 'the principle that women should have economic and social rights equal to those of men'. Given this definition, a Harris poll recently found that 71 per cent of all women in the US identify themselves as feminists. The most common comment from young women who are asked about feminism is 'I'm not a feminist but...' The 'but' usually goes on to include a laundry list to the effect of – 'I want equal pay; I want access to better jobs; I want to have the right to choose whether to have an abortion'. Essentially, these women aren't ready to join a feminist movement of women and men because of the stereotypes attached to the label but they want to reap the benefits from it.

Many young women shy away from a feminist label because of the media's misrepresentation of it, or false assumptions about its history. Others prefer their own label. And still others come to feminism only after a specific experience in their own lives: being sexually harassed at work, for example, or being passed over for a promotion in favor of a male colleague with less experience; working two full-time jobs, one inside the home and one outside, or becoming pregnant and being told only a parent or a judge can authorize a legal abortion.

> ***The most common comment from young women who were asked about feminism is 'I'm not a feminist, but...'***

We, too, struggled with the F-word, fearful of repercussions from our peers and/or family and friends. We embraced the label only after we understood the word and defined it in our own terms. We have both joined an organization called Third Wave to bring a feminist consciousness to our generation and to act on our political convictions.

Third Wave was co-founded in 1992 by Shannon Liss and Rebecca Walker. Third Wave's first project was a cross-country voter-registration drive which brought together a diverse group of 120 young women and men to register 20,000 new voters in inner cities across the US. Third Wavers come from a multiplicity of backgrounds and look to Third Wave as a way to stay connected to a movement, to give validity to their experiences and to celebrate the talents and strength of young women. We want to spread the word that young feminists in 1995 are female and male and they exist in a full range of colors, sizes, sexual orientations and classes – and most importantly we want our voices to be heard.

Many other new organizations have also been created to give space and voice to young women's energy and activism. Anna Maria Nieves, a 23-year-old activist and former program director at one of these, Students Organizing Students, carried the spirit of this generation when, asked recently if all the obstacles for women, and especially for her as a woman of color, seem to be overwhelming. She responded 'I may not be able to change the whole world, but I can change my block.' ■

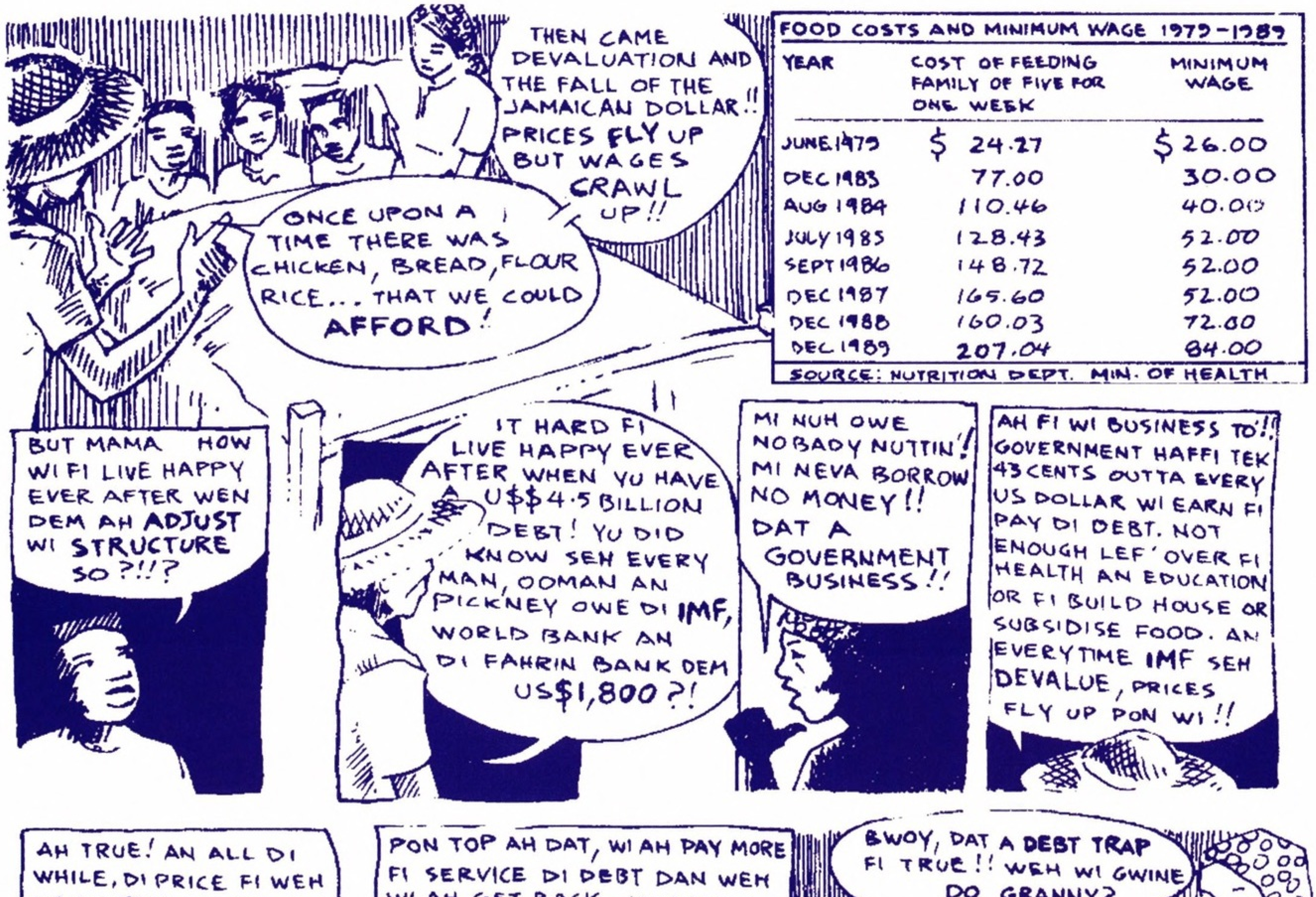
Above left: Rini (see page 9) and Georgina at the inter-generational women's workshop in New York. Below: Third Wavers gather: Amy Richards in the middle; Julie Parker third from right.

THIRD WAVE

Amy Richards writes for *Ms* magazine and **Julie Parker** makes documentaries. Both are 25.

SISTA ANSA an GRANNY A CHAT BOUT LIFE AND DEBT

A cartoon in the local Creole language by the Jamaican women's theatre collective, Sistren



FOOD COSTS AND MINIMUM WAGE 1979 – 1989

YEAR	COST OF FEEDING FAMILY OF FIVE FOR ONE WEEK	MINIMUM WAGE
JUNE 1979	$ 24.27	$ 26.00
DEC 1983	77.00	30.00
AUG 1984	110.46	40.00
JULY 1985	128.43	52.00
SEPT 1986	148.72	52.00
DEC 1987	165.60	52.00
DEC 1988	160.03	72.00
DEC 1989	207.04	84.00

SOURCE: NUTRITION DEPT. MIN. OF HEALTH

THEN CAME DEVALUATION AND THE FALL OF THE JAMAICAN DOLLAR!! PRICES FLY UP BUT WAGES CRAWL UP!!
ONCE UPON A TIME THERE WAS CHICKEN, BREAD, FLOUR RICE... THAT WE COULD AFFORD!
BUT MAMA HOW WI FI LIVE HAPPY EVER AFTER WEN DEM AH ADJUST WI STRUCTURE SO?!!?
IT HARD FI LIVE HAPPY EVER AFTER WHEN YU HAVE A US$4.5 BILLION DEBT! YU DID KNOW SEH EVERY MAN, OOMAN AN PICKNEY OWE DI IMF, WORLD BANK AN DI FAHRIN BANK DEM US$1,800?!
MI NUH OWE NOBADY NUTTIN'! MI NEVA BORROW NO MONEY!! DAT A GOVERNMENT BUSINESS!!
AH FI WI BUSINESS TO!! GOVERNMENT HAFFI TEK 43 CENTS OUTTA EVERY US DOLLAR WI EARN FI PAY DI DEBT. NOT ENOUGH LEF' OVER FI HEALTH AN EDUCATION OR FI BUILD HOUSE OR SUBSIDISE FOOD. AN EVERYTIME IMF SEH DEVALUE, PRICES FLY UP PON WI!!
AH TRUE! AN ALL DI WHILE, DI PRICE FI WEH WI AH SELL TO FARHIN AH GO DUNG, AN DI PRICE FI WEH WI AH BUY FROM FARHIN AH GO UP!
PON TOP AH DAT, WI AH PAY MORE FI SERVICE DI DEBT DAN WEH WI AH GET BACK. YU KNOW SEH BETWEEN 1990 AN 1993 WI WILL PAY DEM US$1,952 MILLION, BUT WI WILL ONLY GET BACK US$1,372 MILLION IN LOAN AN GRANT?!!
BWOY, DAT A DEBT TRAP FI TRUE!! WEH WI GWINE DO GRANNY?
DI GREAT STONE GATS TO MOVE! AN IS ALL AH WI GWINE HAFFI MOVE IT. DEN WI CAN START TALK BOUT 'HAPPY EVER AFTER'!!
FEED WISEL
JUSTICE FI ALL AH WI
CARIB. PEOPLE UNITE AGAINST DI DEBT
MORE DEMOCRACY
SOUTH-SOUTH COOPERATION
DEBT SWAPS
NO TO DEPENDENCE ON PRIMARY EXPORTS
JAMAICAN DEBT US$4.5 BILLION
CARIBBEAN DEBT US$20 BILLION
CARIB DEVELOP OWN TECHNOLOGY
FEED WI SELF
PAY DEBT IN LOCAL CURRENCY

No woman is an island

Post-war euphoria usually means the enforced return of women to their kitchens. **Jane Henriques** finds that in Tigray things have turned out differently...

'OUR GREAT achievement,' Román tells us with pride, 'is that now we are able to elect – and be elected. Before, women could not even speak in public.' Shortly afterwards, in Ethiopia's first-ever national elections, three Tigrayan women are elected for the first time as members of Parliament. Their support came from a huge electorate of uneducated women. 'Whenever a woman speaks at any national meeting,' says Román, 'you expect to hear a Tigrayan accent!' In the Tigrayan regional Parliament 17.6 per cent of members are women – not professional or educated women, but peasants.

In Román's office a banner declares: 'Development is based on peace and the equality of women.' This is the headquarters of the most radical organization in Ethiopia, the Democratic Association of Tigray Women (DATW), of which Román is Chair. Outside on the dirt road women stagger home with vast jars of water on their backs, or lug huge sacks of grain from the market, followed by men prodding donkeys with a stick. In the church compound opposite, hundreds of women, swathed from head-to-toe in long white shawls and standing well apart from the men, attend a Lent service. Those who are menstruating or who have recently had sex may not enter the church. A priest berates them for letting their children run around. 'If you don't teach your children respect for the Lord you will surely bring drought, famine and destruction upon the country – there will be no development or progress!'

'Let me take you to our poultry project', says Román, clearly impatient with talking theory. We arrive at a construction site on the edge of Makelle, the capital of Tigray, which was finally liberated in 1989 not just from Mengistu's military regime but from a century of Amharic domination.

Román, a slight elegant woman in her thirties, was one of the first women fighters with the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF). Their role in the 17-year war was crucial. One-third of the troops, some 40,000, were women. Their participation proved emphatically to men and to women themselves, that they were equally capable. The Women Fighters' Association was formed and later, when peace was achieved in 1991, amalgamated with a civilian organization to become the DATW, which now has half a million members. It has been instrumental in the drafting of a new national policy document on Ethiopian women.

'But the front line is an island,' says Román. 'Those kinds of role reversals were contained within an island. The war has not ended... what we struggled against then and still have to overthrow is underdevelopment.'

We sit in the jeep as the first of the

From fighters to mechanics: Medihin and Wahid are part of the new cohort of Tigrayan women.

JANE HENRIQUES

'short rains' pour down, and look at a few roofless huts. Román explains proudly that this will provide jobs for eight women, eggs and meat that they can sell, and livestock to start projects for other women. 'At this stage,' she says, 'we cannot afford to live with our heads in the clouds. Our targets are rooted in the here and now.'

JANE HENRIQUES

Not resting on her laurels; Román has her feet on the ground.

The construction site seems to symbolize the nature of the struggle: the Tigrayan people are working out their political development at the same time as they labour to rebuild their country. For Tigrayan women, who could not, under feudalism, own anything or be anything, and who did no better under Mengistu, a chicken project represents a huge step forward.

Women are traditionally responsible for the bulk of domestic work and a third of the agricultural tasks, and unless their communities have flour mills and wells they spend their lives in gruelling physical labour, fetching water and firewood, grinding corn, cooking and looking after children. They are frequently condemned to a life of childbearing with virtually no medical assistance for them or their children. A visit to Makelle's hospital impresses us with the magnitude of Román's task.

The stench of the overflowing latrine practically overwhelms us as we enter the gynaecological wing (the hospital has running water for one hour a day). We are taken round the wards by Dr Berhe. Until recently she was the only gynaecologist for more than two million women. The first ward is full of women with prolapsed wombs. None of them is much over 35. Incessant childbearing from an early age and carrying gigantic weights leaves most rural women in chronic pain. Mortality is also high, much of it from 'backstreet' abortions (abortion is illegal) and haemorrhaging in labour.

'The men knew we were fighters. We worked with them, and struggled with them and so we were accepted.'

In the next ward two young girls are in for fistula operations. Mahtsenema is only 13. A few years ago she would have been married at 7 or 8, but now the minimum age of marriage for girls is 15. Poverty, however, drives parents to marry off their daughters as soon as they can. She has been raped by the man to whom she was engaged, badly ruptured and could have been incontinent for life if she had not had an operation.

Bedela, 18, has been damaged, as so many girls are, by prolonged labour while her body was still too immature for childbearing. 'For every one who gets this operation,' Dr Berhe informs us, 'there are probably three or four more that we never hear about. They will be social outcasts. These are the lucky ones.'

Hadesh, an informal 'midwife' upgraded and trained by the Mengistu regime as a 'traditional birth attendant', makes tea for us in her tiny room, a chicken clucking round her 'kit'. 'I tell women that early marriage is bad, and not to circumcise their daughters as it complicates labour. Most people in the towns don't do it now. I used to believe that if it wasn't done the man would have difficulty penetrating – but I don't now.' Some priests in the Orthodox Church still endorse genital mutilation, saying that an 'uncircumcised' girl will have uncurbable desires and society will fall apart as a consequence.

As we set off for our next appointment, pondering on the enormity of the Association's task, we suddenly catch sight of two young women swinging down the street in blue dungarees and men's sandals (a sure sign that they have been fighters). We delightedly chase after them.

Medihin, 23, and Wahid, 24, are mechanics for the Relief Society of Tigray. They joined the TPLF as girls of 12 or 13 (one way of avoiding an early marriage). and were given a basic education and arms and then taught to be mechanics. After battle they recovered tanks abandoned by the Ethiopian Army and repaired them for use by the TPLF.

'We were never afraid,' says Medihin, 'we just wanted to get education and clinics for our people'. 'The men knew we were fighters,' Wahid tells us. 'We worked with them, and struggled with them so we were accepted.' Now they work keeping Food Aid trucks on the road. 'Because we were in the struggle we got equality with the men – that's why we're happy working here. If we had not done this we would have been like other women in the village – carrying jars of water.'

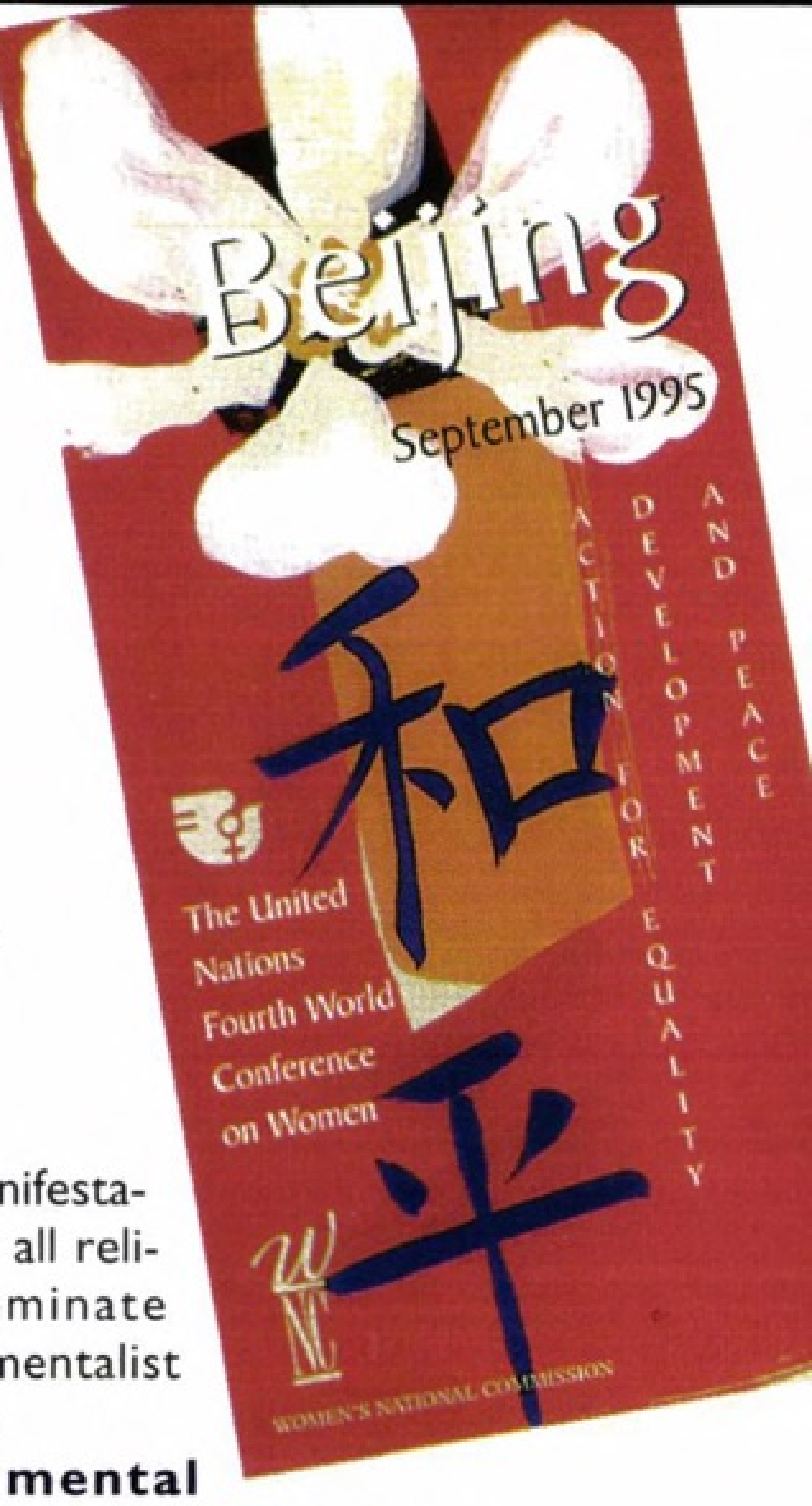
'The armed conflict did fuel expectations for women to participate,' Román tells us, 'and huge barriers to change have been dismantled in the process. Now we encourage women to participate in everything.' We are soon to learn just how far this philosophy is taken. Thousands of women all over Tigray are being mobilized in 'Soil and Water Conservation' schemes to rehabilitate the very damaged land. These include re-afforestation, dam-building and terracing.

Awtash is our guide as we set off in the early morning to visit a major local project, bumping along a rocky track across a high and arid plateau. One of Román's 'next-in-command', Awtash is the Women's Association Chair for the whole of the southern zone of Tigray. 'I joined the TPLF during the war,' she tells us. 'But I had young children so they wouldn't let me be a combat fighter.' Armed and trained nonetheless, she campaigned among young people to politicize them and involve them in the liberation struggle. This experience was invaluable. Going now from village to village, mostly on foot, she has mobilized almost 5,000 villagers to build an earth dam to provide irrigation for their fields. We pass small groups of them, endlessly streaming in from all directions as if in some vast biblical drama, to converge on the worksite. At least half are women, babies on their backs, dressed in the long greying robes, the colour of the earth, that are typical of the region. Some are making a three-hour journey to work for eight hours to receive three kilos of flour.

'Because they often get good results very quickly it makes them feel strong and confident,' Awtash explains. 'Often men and women have not worked side-by-side like this before. The men see how capable the women are and the women are less afraid of the men when they go to meetings.'

This pays off at local council level, where one-third of the members are now women. But as two of the criteria for membership are literacy and proven leadership skills, this leaves women at a disadvantage. 'It is not an issue of women against men,' insists Román. 'Women are the victims of a backward society and until we build our economy this will not change much – that is why women must participate in every aspect of development.' ■

Jane Henriques is a freelance writer who has recently returned from Ethiopia.


Beijing
September 1995
Action for Equality, Development and Peace
和
平
The United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women
WNC
Women's National Commission

ACTION

The media might like to think the women's movement no longer has a role – but a host of diverse organizations worldwide give that the lie.

BELOW IS A LIST OF CAMPAIGNING ORGANIZATIONS. Local women's groups – such as women against pornography, rape-crisis centres, women against violence and mediawatch groups should be listed in your telephone directory. Non-governmental organizations may also have women's officers or gender sections.

INTERNATIONAL

DAWN (Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era) is a Third World feminist network which looks at the cultural and economic factors related to women's participation in the development process. Today, DAWN has a network of some 4,500 researchers, activists and policy-makers and produces newsletters and publications. The DAWN Secretariat is based at the Women and Development Unit (WAND), University of the West Indies, School of Continuing Studies, Pinelands, St Michael, Barbados. Tel: (809) 426-9288 Fax: (809) 426-3006.

ISIS was created in 1974 as a channel of information and communication between women. There are documentation centres and two bases which produce material in Spanish and English.

Spanish: Casilla 2067, Correo Central, Santiago, Chile. Fax: (562) 638 31 42. E-mail:isis@qx.apc.org.

English: PO Box 1837, Quezon City Main, Quezon City 1100, Philippines Tel: (632) 967-297. E-mail: isis@phil.gn.apc.org.

Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) has branches and campaigns in most countries. Their central offices are at 1 rue de Varembe, 1211 Geneva 20, Switzerland. Tel: (22) 733-6175. Fax: (22) 740-1063.

Women in Development Europe (WIDE), Square Ambiorix 10, 1040 Brussels. Tel: (32 2) 732 4410. Fax: (32 2) 732-1934. E-mail: WIDE@gn.apc.org. Working to influence European and international policies and to raise awareness on gender and development issues.

AOTEAROA/NEW ZEALAND

National Council of Women of New Zealand (Inc)/Te Kaunihera Wahine o Aotearoa, PO Box 12 -117 Wellington. Tel: (04) 473 7623, Fax (04) 499 5554. With 38 branches throughout the country, the Council functions to serve women, the family and the community through discussion and action.

Women's Health Action, PO Box 9947 Newmarket. Tel (09) 520 5295. Fax (09) 520 4152. Women's health advocacy group which provides information services for women and lobbies for health services to meet women's needs.

Maori Women's Welfare League, PO Box 12-072, Thorndon, Wellington. Tel: (04) 473 6451. Fax: (04) 499 6802. With over 200 branches nationally and several branches overseas, the League aims to empower and improve the wellbeing of Maori women and their families..

Women's Electoral Lobby, PO Box 11285, Wellington. Tel: (04) 562 8992. Aims to get women into areas of public decision-making.

Affirmative Action, PO Box 12361 Wellington. Tel: (04) 475 7818. Fax (04) 475 3552. Promotes equal opportunity for women, particularly in the area of employment.

AUSTRALIA

Association of Non-English Speaking Background Women of Australia, 133 Parramatta Rd, Granville, NSW 2142. Tel: (02) 637-4370. Represents NESB women across all cultures in Australia. It acts as a lobby group, promotes participation of women in all aspects of work and society, and works toward the elimination of sexism and racism.

Ministry for the Status and Advancement of Women, Level 11, 100 William Street, Woolloomooloo, NSW 2011. Tel: (02) 334-1160. Aims to improve the status of women in government, the commercial sector and other workplaces, undertake and provide research, consultation and education and promote service provision.

Women's Electoral Lobby, 44 Albion Street, Surry Hills, 2007, NSW. Tel: (02) 212-4374. A women's political lobby which identifies sexism in society, exposes it and lobbies against it.

BRITAIN

Change, PO Box 824, London SE24 9JS. Tel/fax: (0171) 277-6187. Aims to educate and alert public opinion to the inequalities are imposed upon women through law, practice and custom by disseminating information; also to campaign, lobby and train around women's issues.

National Women's Network, 11 Goodwin St., London N4 3HQ. Tel: (0171) 263-7553. Aims to inform and mobilize women in Britain around international issues as they affect women in both South and North. Facilitates information exchange between groups and individuals, and campaigns for greater gender fairness.

Womankind (Worldwide), 122 Whitechapel, High Street, London E1 7PT. Tel: (0171) 247-6931. Supports women's groups and organizations in developing countries.

Women Against Fundamentalism, 129 Seven Sisters Road, London N7 7QG. Tel: (0171) 272-6563. Committed to networking, challenging and organizing against manifestations of fundamentalism in all religions and to disseminate information about fundamentalist activities affecting women.

Women's Environmental Network, Aberdeen Studios, 22 Highbury Grove, London N5 2EA. Tel: (0171) 354-8823. Informs, educates and empowers women who care about the environment. Current campaigns include forest and paper, air pollution, the glamour industry and sanitary protection.

CANADA

MATCH International Centre, 200 Elgin Street, Ste 1102, Ottawa, ON, K2P 1L5. Tel: (613) 238-1312. Fax: (613) 238-6867. A small feminist agency which supports and funds women's projects in the Third World. Also does public education work. Key areas of interest are violence against women, leadership training and community organization.

National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC), 234 Eglinton Ave E, Ste 203, Toronto, ON, M4P 1K5. Tel: (416) 932-1718. Fax: (416) 932-0064. National women's organization with hundreds of regional member groups. Focus on major policy areas including economic justice, reproductive technologies, health and immigration.

Women in the Americas, Oxfam Canada, 294 Albert Street, Ste 300, Ottawa, ON K1P 6E6. Tel: (613) 237-5236. Fax: (613) 237-0524. A new initiative to build links between women's groups in Canada and the South especially around the impact of economic restructuring on women's lives.

Sophie 1995

Above left: from 'Women Weaving the World Together, a project to make a 20km ribbon for Beijing. Top right: leaflet from the British Women's National Commission. Above: graphic by Sophie for the 'Testimony of women'.

UNITED STATES

The Global Fund for Women, 2480 Sand Hill Road, Ste 100, Menlo Park, CA 94025. Tel: (415)

854-0420. Fax: (415) 854-8050. Funds small-scale Third World women's projects with the goal of empowering women to change their lives and their communities. Focus on women's rights and economic autonomy.

National Organization of Women, 1000 16th St NW, Ste 700, Washington DC 20036. Tel: (202) 331-0066. Fax: (202) 785-8576. National women's organization with 500 chapters and 250,000 members across the US. Campaigns and lobbies on major women's issues including equal rights, abortion and violence against women.

Third Wave, 185 Franklin Street, 3rd Floor, New York, NY 10013. Tel: (212) 925-3400. Fax: (212) 925-3427. E-mail: 3Wave@nyo.com. A member-driven, national non-profit organization devoted to young feminist activism for social change.

Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO), 845 Third Ave, 15th Floor, New York, NY 1022. Tel: (212) 759-7982. Fax: (212)759-8647. Email: wedo@igc.apc.org. Works to put women's issues on the UN agenda. Also supports development of an international network of women activists concerned with environment, development and social justice.

THERE ARE MANY CAMPAIGNS LEADING UP TO THE CONFERENCE IN BEIJING. BELOW ARE A FEW THAT WILL CONTINUE BEYOND SEPTEMBER...

· 180 DAYS/180 WAYS ·
WOMEN'S ACTION CAMPAIGN '95

180 DAYS, 180 WAYS is a campaign leading up to the Conference which aims to involve all the millions of people who are not going to Beijing in activities to support the goals of the Platform of Action. It is being organized by WEDO (see under United States) and includes 180 ways of taking action, from switching household responsibilities for at least one day to promoting 'sustainable lives and attainable dreams'.

On 9 September National Women's Network in Britain are inviting women to speak or just join in their **Testimony of Women** day which will highlight the real needs and rights of women in the light of the Beijing Conference. This will be followed up by regional events.

Thanks to Peggy Antrobus, Georgina Ashworth, Nandini Azad, Rini Banerjee, Jane Connors, Angela Cummins, Jane Esuantsiwa Goldsmith, Georgina Gonzalez, Alison Farrell, Liz Hardwick, Amanda Hazelton, Nadia Hijab, Emma Hooper, Tina Jorgensen, Belinda Lawley, Pauline Muchina, Leba Rubinoff, Pamela Sparr, Jennifer Stokes, Sue Tibballs, Joyce Umbima, Rachel Wareham, Louisa Waugh and Rosina Wiltshire.

DIARY 1995/6

30 AUGUST – 8 SEPTEMBER: NGO Forum on Women in Beijing 'Looking at the World through Women's Eyes'. Where 30,000 – 40,000 women will gather to debate, decide and party. The biggest women's event ever.

4-15 SEPTEMBER: Fourth World Conference on Women for Equality Development and Peace. The official governmental conference. Watch out for: manoeuvres to go back on the language of previous world conferences, particularly the Cairo conference on population.

6 SEPTEMBER: Proposed International Day of Action for Women's Equality (Action all round the world).

8 MARCH 1996: International Women's Day.

RECOMMENDED READING:

NEW BOOKS ON INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S ISSUES

MOST OF THESE PUBLISHERS ALSO HAVE OTHER MATERIAL ON WOMEN.

Arms to Fight, Arms to Protect: Women Speak Out About Conflict edited by Olivia Bennett, Jo Bexley and Kitty Warnock (Panos 1995). Women speak for themselves about their experiences of conflict – as fighters, mothers and organizers for peace.

A Diplomacy of the Oppressed: New Directions in International Feminism edited by Georgina Ashworth (Zed 1995). A range of contributors show how feminist internationalism has strengthened during the last ten years.

Fundamentalism and Gender edited by John Stratton Hawley (Oxford University Press 1994) Looks in detail at Islam, Hinduism, the New Religions of Japan and American Christianity and reveals just how control over women is central to all fundamentalist agendas.

Half the World, Half a Chance: an Introduction to Gender and Development by Julia Cleves Mosse (Oxfam 1993). Discusses why and how women are disadvantaged by development and gives case-studies of action by women's organizations in different parts of the world.

Mortgaging Women's Lives: Feminist Critiques of Structural Adjustment edited by Pamela Sparr (Zed Books 1994). An exploration of the impact of structural adjustment on women in countries ranging from Jamaica to Ghana, Egypt to Sri Lanka.

My Children, My Gold: Meetings with Women of the Fourth World by Debbie Taylor (Virago 1994). Families headed by women now comprise one-quarter of all households in the world. Former NI editor Debbie Taylor gives seven portraits of women in seven different countries.

Private Decision, Public Debate: Women, Reproduction and Population (Panos 1994). Journalists from Africa, Asia and Latin America use interviews with ordinary men and women to discuss a range of reproductive health concerns, from son preference to HIV, unauthorized sterilizations to female genital mutilation.

Reversed Realities: Gender Hierarchies in Development Thought by Naila Kabeer (Verso 1994). Lays bare the deeply-entrenched biases underpinning mainstream development theory and examines alternative frameworks for analyzing gender hierarchies.

Women and Violence: Realities and Responses Worldwide edited by Miranda Davies (Zed Books 1994). Highlights the extent of violence against women, from conflict to domestic violence, but also charts the efforts being made to challenge such violence.

Women and World Development (Zed Books). A series of illustrated books giving the most recent information, debate and action. The series includes the world economic crisis, disability, work and the family.

STATISTICS AND REFERENCE BOOKS

The World's Women 1995: Trends and Statistics (United Nations Department of Public Information). Available from United Nations Publications in New York and Geneva. Timed to coincide with the Beijing Conference, this substantive report brings together a wealth of much-needed up-to-date statistics on women worldwide.

Women and Politics Worldwide edited by Barbara J Nelson and Najma Chowdhury (Yale University Press 1994). A guide to women's situations around the world, this weighty tome surveys 43 countries in detail and demonstrates that nowhere do women have political status, access or influence equal to men's.

WHAT WOMEN WANT, 3-4 Albion Place, Galena Road, London W6 OLT. Tel: (0181) 563-8603. Contact Bernadette Vallely. A postcard campaign to find out what women want. Seven million will be distributed in Britain to be collected for the Beijing Conference and will help set an agenda for the women's movement. The campaign is looking for women's groups in other countries who would like to formulate similar action.

WHAT WOMEN WANT
Go on. Fill it in.

WHAT DO YOU WANT?

Affix Stamp Here

Name
Address
Tel
Would you like to know more? Yes/No

WHAT WOMEN WANT
3-4 Albion Place
Galena Road
London W6 OLT

or take it to your nearest branch of The Body Shop by 30 August 1995

The NI Interview

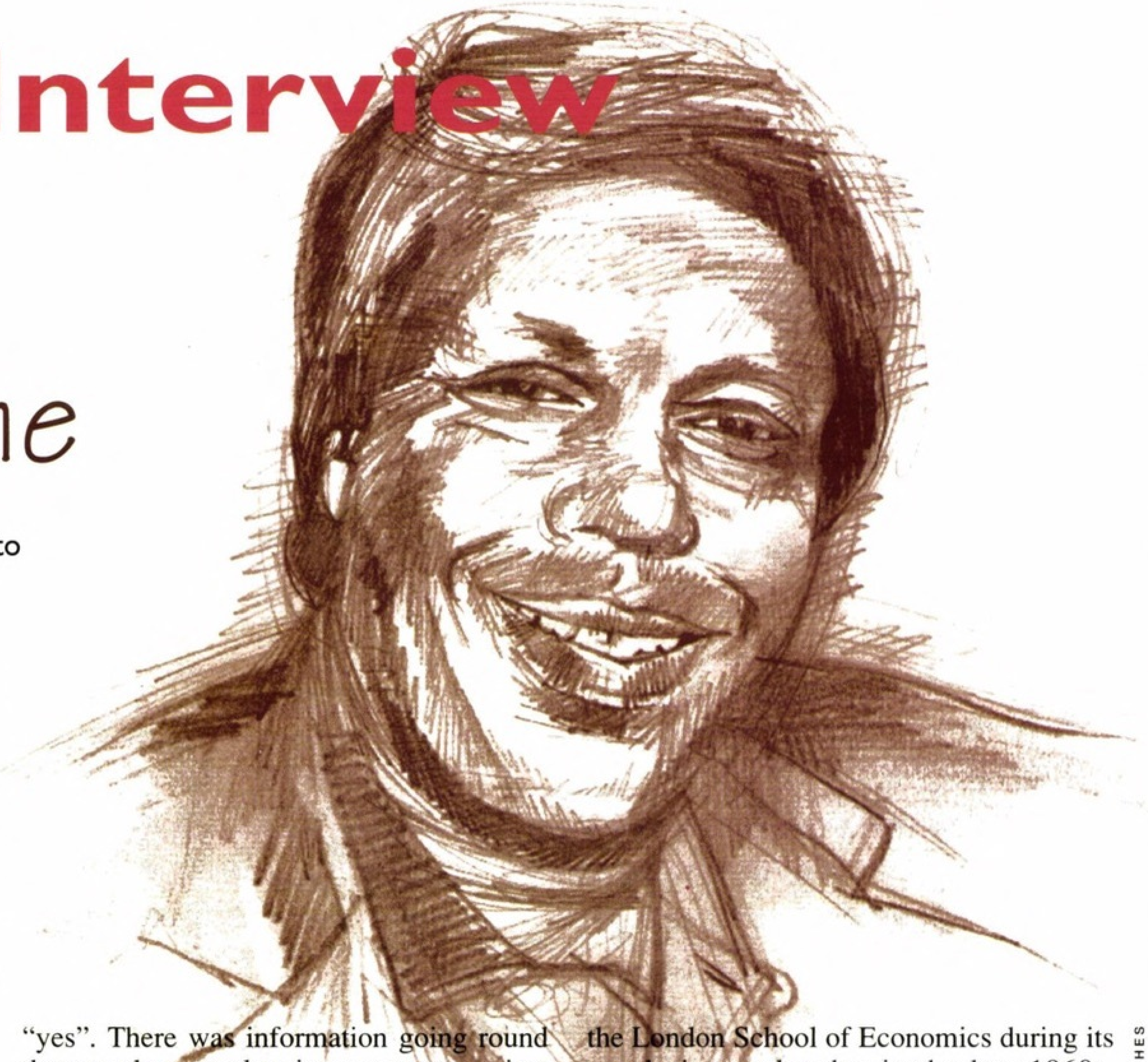


ILLUSTRATION: ALAN HUGHES

Kumar Rupesinghe

Vanessa Baird meets a man dedicated to stopping wars before they start.

If there was a traumatic turning-point in the life and consciousness of Kumar Rupesinghe, it was the pogrom against the Tamils in his native Sri Lanka in the late 1970s which led to the outbreak of civil war in 1981.

'It was for me a period of trying to understand why so many of my dear friends had to die. A lot of them died on both sides. This pogrom was unacceptable; that people were killed like this in my own neighbourhood, was unacceptable. I was ashamed of being Sinhalese. I was ashamed of being Sri Lankan. I had to re-examine most of my assumptions about fellow human beings and their rationality.'

He had already gone into exile in Norway. As a leading member of the progressive Bandaranaike Government who stood up for the rights of Tamils, he had become a target for right-wing extremists.

For Rupesinghe and many of his contemporaries the outbreak of ethnic violence was a shattering of illusions and beliefs.

'You see, we all thought there was democracy in Sri Lanka. Because there was 95-per-cent literacy and we had a parliamentary system with different parties and we had a high quality of life, we assumed that things were going well.

'When this explosion of ethnic violence started... the concept of imperialism as the devil incarnate had to be redefined. It was our own people who were the perpetrators of evil against our own people. We could not blame colonialism and imperialism for what was happening.'

He and his generation of intellectuals had been following the Marxist 'dependency' theories of Franck and others. Suddenly, faced with ethnicity and nationalism, they had to find explanations which anti-imperialism did not necessarily provide. Nationalism had up to then been seen as a good thing, a defence against imperialism.

'We had to look within ourselves and when we did that we saw that we had inherited a lot of stereotypes about Tamils. We had notions of what it is to be Sinhalese. I was brought up thinking I was of pure race, of Aryan origin. It was not just something the Germans inherited, it was universal.'

There were other difficult questions to ask. 'We asked ourselves: could we have prevented it? The answer of course was "yes". There was information going round that people were planning a pogrom against the Tamils but we had not really focused enough to do what needed to be done.'

At this point his interest in conflict became more sharply focused. While in Norway he started a database on the causes of conflict and how to stop it, at the International Peace Research Institute in Oslo. 'The whole Sri Lankan issue impelled me to look at why it had not been prevented.'

'It's not just political parties and states that determine politics now. It is citizen-based movements, popular movements too.'

He has been dedicated to the task of prevention ever since. Today he heads the London-based organization International Alert, a non-partisan bridge-building initiative which works to unite peoples divided by ethnic and internal conflict, to prevent war and enable mediation and dialogue to take place. Recently its main focus has been Burundi.

What drives Rupesinghe is the conviction that wars *can* be prevented. The trouble is the international community tends to get involved when it is already too late. Then there is a massive and costly humanitarian response, as seen recently in Bosnia and Rwanda. What the international community needs to do is put funds and energy into conflict prevention. This does not require a crystal ball – in most cases there are always clear indications that trouble is brewing.

This is a fairly radical agenda. But Rupesinghe, who was a student activist at the London School of Economics during its revolutionary heyday in the late 1960s, looks an unlikely radical now. A smartly-dressed man in his early fifties, he looks more like a UN official as he makes high-level phone calls around the world. He comes across as someone capable of exerting considerable influence at high levels and pulling strings where needed.

Besides, he nowadays distances himself from the 'radical' label: 'I have become quite sceptical of political colours. I think we are departing from the traditional dichotomies of Left and Right. Since the end of the Cold War we have been moving into an area where on the one side we have states; on the other we have a tremendous multicentred universe of non-governmental organizations, corporations and non-state entities, which has grown immensely and has its own way of intervening politically. It's not just political parties and states that determine politics now. It is citizen-based movements, popular movements too.'

But he also sees a dangerous aspect in the fragmentation, parochialism and militancy of ethnic groups.

'I think it's crucial to recognize the importance not only of transformation outside but your own transformation too. The very deep, psychologically traumatic experience of the war and pogrom in Sri Lanka brought me to this thinking. I have tried to find out within myself whether I could have contributed to this scenario.

'My own feeling is that the dignity of a people depends on how it treats a minority. This idea has dominated my thinking in the past 10 or 15 years. If you defame others, if you oppress the other, you cannot have the dignity of a human relationship.' ■

International Alert can be contacted at 1 Glyn Street, London SE11 5HT, England. Tel: (0171) 793 8383. Fax: (0171) 793 7975.

Reviews

music

Gay, witty and angry: Boy George cuts through the ambiguities.

Cheapness and Beauty

by **Boy George**
(Virgin CDV 2780)

Thirteen years on from Boy George and Culture Club's first foray onto global TV screens, people can still remember the impact that this be-frilled, dreadlocked creature made. The tabloid press coined the phrase, gender-bender, to describe George O'Dowd.

Returning with his solo album Boy George is using the occasion to cut through any remaining ambiguities. The shadowy genderless figure that many of Culture Club's songs addressed is gone. Amongst **Cheapness and Beauty's** 13 tracks, there are songs addressed to George's boyfriends past and present. There are posthumous farewells to friends like performance artists Leigh Bowery and designer Stevie Hughes, both victims of HIV-related illness. *God don't hold a grudge* and *Same Thing in Reverse* deal with coming out as gay, while *Evil is so civilized* is a chilling number, written in response to reading about a spate of homophobic murders in Texas. Not suprisingly, the music is substantially different. George has shelved many of the poppy romantic mannerisms of his earlier records in favour of a fierce and edgy glam-influenced rock. **Cheapness and Beauty** is powerful, witty and justifiably angry.

It is also, perhaps, George's riposte to other gay artists that he wasn't doing enough for the cause, going for the blush-er-and-pout rather than banner-and-placard style of protest against homophobia. With this album, George's position is completely clear. He demands tolerance and understanding and does so with typical wit. 'Is it twisted, is it sick? Mother Nature's little trick?' he asks in *Same Thing in Reverse*, before replying 'I don't have to feel no shame, in God's image I am made'. As protest songs, this collection goes beyond the dourly political. It's a statement articulated as only one of pop's most indomitable figures could: fabulously.

Politics ☆☆☆☆
Entertainment ☆☆☆☆ **LG**

books

Altered States:

A reader in the New World Order
edited by **Phyllis Bennis and Michel Moushabeck**
(Olive Branch Press, ISBN 1-56656-112-4)

States of Disarray

by **United Nations Research Institute for Social Development**
(UNRISD, ISBN 92-9085-013-2)

Books on 'the state of the world' are appearing thick and fast in the current period between the end of the Cold War and the beginning of the new millennium. These two books are diametrically opposed in style though not necessarily in content or message.

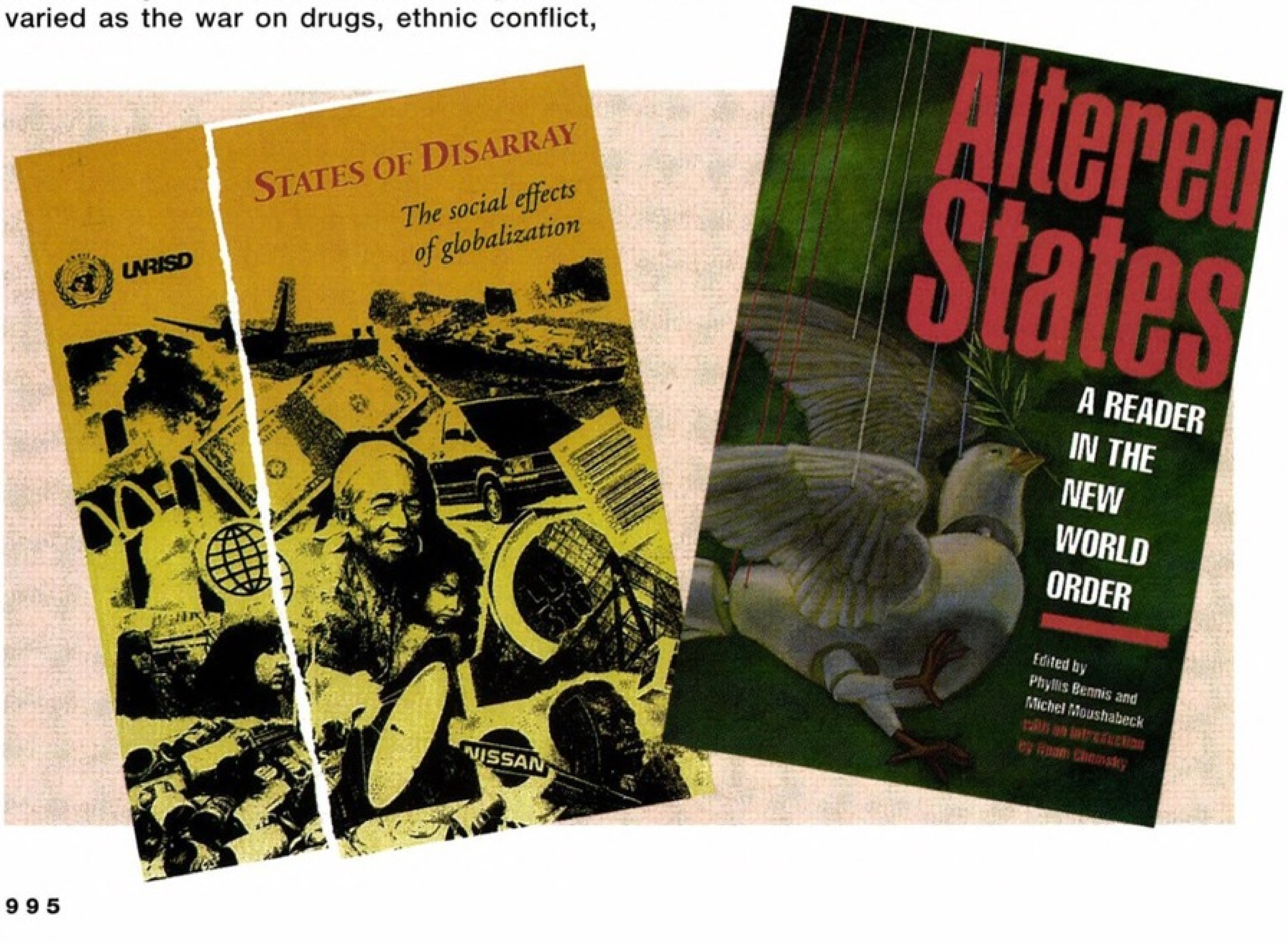
Its blurb describes **Altered States** as 'a comprehensive guide to the emerging new world order'. 'Guide' is perhaps not the right word. It's a collection of essays by an impressive and international array of over 50 thinkers and commentators including Noam Chomsky, Edward Said, Mary Kaldor and Tony Benn. The emphasis is very much on the role of US foreign policy in the post-Cold War, post-Gulf War, post-Soviet world. Given the editors' penchant for the Middle East, there is a strong and incisive focus on this political hotspot and the effects of the Gulf War regionally and worldwide.

Divided into thematic and geopolitical sections, this book provides informed and often overtly polemic, reading. But it is dense – and best suited to dipping into if you want to read a thought-provoking essay about a particular subject or area.

Quite different in approach is **States of Disarray**. This can properly be described as a 'guide'. Instead of just putting together essays or papers by prominent academics, the editor – former **NI** staffer Peter Stalker – has drawn on different reports and studies, digested the material and produced a book that is far more journalistic in feel, though equally stimulating and informative. The central theme – the social effects of globalization – takes in subjects as varied as the war on drugs, ethnic conflict, migration, transnational corporations, and the changing fabric of personal relations, and weaves them together into a coherent whole. It also manages to conclude positively with ideas on how to build international solidarity. Lucid in style, rich in facts and figures and containing some quite startling photos, a vast and ambitious project has been turned into something that pretty much anyone can read and learn from with maximum ease.

Politics ☆☆☆☆
Entertainment ☆☆

Politics ☆☆☆
Entertainment ☆☆☆☆☆ **BS and VB**


STATES OF DISARRAY
The social effects of globalization
UNRISD
NISSAN
Altered States
A READER IN THE NEW WORLD ORDER
Edited by Phyllis Bennis and Michel Moushabeck
with an introduction by Noam Chomsky

film

Burnt by the Sun

directed by **Nikita Mikhalkov**

Set in 1936, Russian director Nikita Mikhalkov's latest film reflects on a period of history that it's only been possible to renegotiate in the past few years. Ostensibly the film is reminiscent of a Chekhov play as a large eccentric family gathers for its summer holidays in a rambling house belonging to Sergeant Kotov, a military hero of the Russian Revolution. The days are eternally sunny and there is plenty of food and wine in the larder as Kotov relaxes with his young wife Marousia, and their sprightly six-year-old daughter Nadia.

But into the idyll arrives Dimitri, a rather dashing young man who it transpires was Marousia's lover a decade earlier. This is not his only secret: he is on a mission to collect Kotov and take him back to Moscow. For Dimitri is a member of the newly-formed secret police and Kotov has been targeted by Stalin for a show trial.

Burnt by the Sun is a film about betrayal in the most obvious of ways. A man who fought for the White Army while Kotov was on the side of the Revolution, Dimitri has been reinstated for the price of his dreadful task. But the film is equally concerned to draw on the more universal nature of emotional betrayal as the tensions between Kotov, Marousia and her former lover are explored. It is this, one suspects, rather than the politics that helped the film win its Best Foreign Film Oscar at Hollywood this year.

In a rather loaded symbolism, fireballs become recurring motifs presaging destruction. It is the dark side to the sunny idyll – as if to say one shouldn't invest in any notion of perfection. Even as he is driven off to his execution, the ardent patriot Kotov still believes that one phone call to Stalin will sort out the 'problem'. But as the film draws to a conclusion, with little Nadia waving her daddy good-bye as he goes on his trip, the sun feels decidedly cold.

Politics ☆☆☆
Entertainment ☆☆☆ **LF**

Reviewers: Louise Gray, Brigitte Scheffer, Vanessa Baird, Lizzie Francke.

STAR RATING

Excellent	☆☆☆☆☆
Very good	☆☆☆☆
Good	☆☆☆
Fair	☆☆
Poor	☆

Reviews editor: **Vanessa Baird**

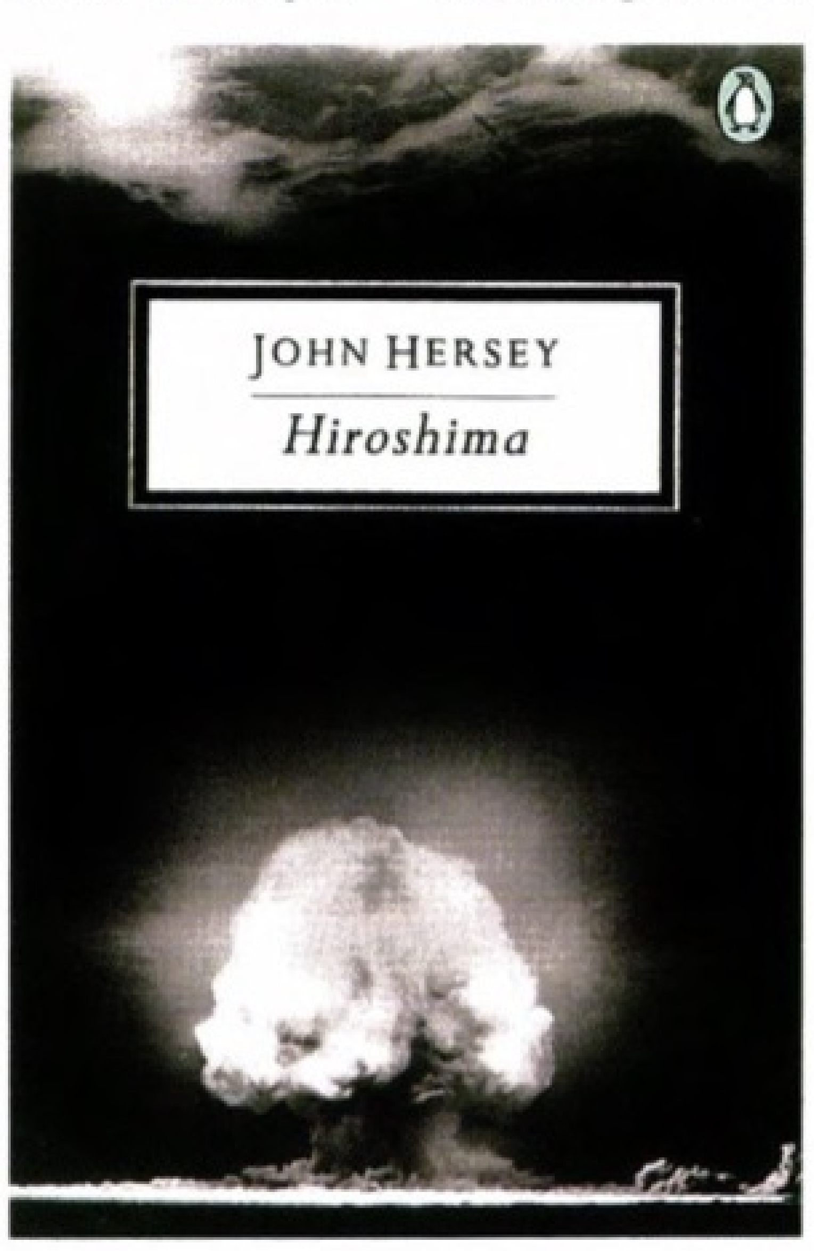
THE **CLASSIC**

Hiroshima

...being the book that lifted the lid on the implications of the Bomb.

On 31 August 1946 the *New Yorker* published an extraordinary edition. The cover – an anodyne picnic scene – carried no clue as to the shattering contents. Inside were no cartoons or fiction, no gossip from the metropolitan scene, no reviews. The entire magazine consisted of a 30,000-word article by the journalist and author John Hersey. The introductory note explained why.

'The *New Yorker* this week devotes its entire editorial space to an article on the almost complete obliteration of a city by one atomic bomb, and what happened to the people of that city. It does so in the conviction that few of us have yet comprehended the all-but-incredible destructive power of this weapon, and that everyone might well take time to consider the terrible implications of its use.'



The title of the article and the name of the city was of course Hiroshima. Hersey arrived in the city nearly a year after the bomb. He spoke to many people and built his tale around six individuals who, through luck, judgement or blind fate, survived. At the moment of the explosion we meet and follow the lives of Toshiko Sasaki, a clerical worker; Masakazu Fujii, a doctor in a private hospital; Hatsuyo Nakamura, widow of a tailor; William Kleinsorge, a German Jesuit priest; Terufumi Saki, a junior hospital doctor and Kiyoshi Tanimoto, a Methodist pastor.

The lives of these six people and their families vividly personalize for us the bland euphemism 'civilian casualties'. Names are important: the crucial first step in the ability to kill in war is to demonize the enemy, to turn soldier and civilian alike into something less than human whose destruction can be justified. The overwhelming sense one gets from these stories is of ordinary people living their lives as best they can amid the privations and arbitrary tyrannies of war; coping, in much the same way as did the inhabitants of London during the Blitz or the denizens of the Warsaw Ghetto.

Hersey's manner of telling is unmistakably journalistic; sparse and measured descriptions of a cumulative horror and a dawning realization among the people in the days and weeks following the bombing that the worst was not over with the explosion. The writing is stripped of novelistic conceits, the better to explain how the survivors, bewildered, sick, often badly injured, dealt with the overwhelming shock of the destruction of their city.

What had the Americans done to cause such wholesale destruction? Could they have used gasoline to cause a firestorm? Had they used explosive magnesium powder or did they have some new and terrifying weapon? Rumours spread in ripples as people hunted for lost families, a doctor, a place of safety. Here the Reverend Tanimoto realizes for the first time that the bombing was not confined to his area of the city as he meets fleeing multitudes.

'The eyebrows of some were burned off and skin hung from their faces and hands. Often, because of pain, they held their hands up as if carrying something in both hands. Some were vomiting as they walked. Many were naked or in shreds of clothing. On some undressed bodies the burns had made patterns – of undershirt straps and suspenders and on the skin of some women... the shape of flowers they had had on their kimonos.'

It was not until a week after the explosion that vague notions started circulating that the city had been destroyed by the enormous energy released in the splitting of atoms, the citizens of Hiroshima being the last to discover the truth about the cataclysmic experiment to which they had been subjected. In a hideous irony, deaths from radiation sickness began at about the same time, cracking the stoical bafflement of many of the victims and bringing a hatred of the perpetrators. Dr Sasaki said later: 'I see they are holding a trial for war criminals in Tokyo just now. I think they ought to try the men who decided to use the Bomb and they should hang them all.'

The decision made by the US military and political authorities 50 years ago to drop an atom bomb on Hiroshima bids fair to be *the* defining moment of our century. The world changed for ever on Monday 5 August 1945 and the shadow of the bomb has fallen over every moment since. Much is being made at the moment of 'remembrance', as we are enjoined to celebrate the victory over Japan. A partial, self-righteous remembrance, without humility, mocks not only the 200,000 Japanese men, women and children killed and injured in Hiroshima but also all the civilian dead, from whatever country.

John Hersey's account of Hiroshima has in common with *Schindler's Ark* and Primo Levi's books about the Holocaust the sheer necessity of telling; the urgency of the message forces a clarity and simplicity on the writing. Hersey's conclusion, in 1946, is one we are still pondering today. Questioning whether total war and the targeting of non-combatants is ever justifiable, he asks: 'Does it not have material and spiritual evil as its consequences which far exceed whatever good might result? When will our moralists give us a clear answer to this question?' ■

Peter Whittaker

Hiroshima *by John Hersey (1946). Still available in Penguin.*

Curiosities

QUESTIONS THAT HAVE ALWAYS INTRIGUED YOU ABOUT THE WORLD WILL APPEAR IN THIS, YOUR SECTION, AND BE ANSWERED BY OTHER READERS. PLEASE ADDRESS YOUR ANSWERS AND QUESTIONS TO 'CURIOSITIES'.

Is there any evidence that matriarchal cultures ever existed and if so, were they more egalitarian than patriarchal ones?

In terms of sexual egalitarianism the Nayar caste in Malabar, south-west India may have qualified. In pre-colonial times Nayar women would enter a ritualistic marriage, spend three days in a hut with their husband to consummate the union, and then effectively dissolve it so as to be free to take up to 12 lovers. As Nayar men spent much of their time in combat, male death rates were high and this custom ensured that their caste would procreate itself.

D Moran
Manchester, England

If we define matriarchy as a mirror of patriarchy there is little evidence that matriarchal cultures ever existed. There is, however, evidence of cultures in the past where matrilineality and matrilocality have been or are practised. The former seems to have occurred in Hittite society in Asia Minor and both practices are thought to have occurred in Catul Huyuk in Anatolia – present-day Turkey. But even in societies where there have been powerful female leaders or where the female is represented in the divine, this does not suggest the existence of an egalitarian society, let alone a matriarchal one. I recommend Gerda Lerner's book *The Creation of Patriarchy* (Oxford University Press)

Harriet Conniff
London, England

In First Nation (or Native American) societies women had considerable informal power in that they controlled the distribution of food. When Huron couples married the husband went to live with the woman.

Anonymous
Canada

The use of the word 'matriarchal' in itself shows up the difficulties we have in thinking our way out of current paradigms. The alternative to one way of organizing society is not necessarily its opposite. I recommend Riane Eislers's excellent book *The Chalice and the Blade* for an inspirational view of the development of gender-based power structures in history and prehistory.

Paul Dabinett
Tavistock, England

How did human beings learn to take hard, inedible seeds, grind them up, mix them with water and turn them into something they could eat?

I am surprised that **NI** would publish such an inaccurate, Eurocentric and possibly sexist answer to this question in **NI 268**. The suggestion that seed-grinding was 'learnt by initiate priests in Megalithic times through inspiration' is a highly speculative interpretation of selected archaeological evidence.

Seed-grinding is more likely to have been developed by women, who have primary responsibility for plant-food processing in most recent and contemporary foraging societies. Archaeological evidence suggests that seed-grinding developed independently over the past 10,000 years in those parts of the world where suitable plant food were already being collected for food. For example: Middle East (wheat and barley) 8000 BC; China (millet) 2000 BC; sub-Saharan Africa (millet and sorghum) 3000 BC; Australia (wild grasses) 2000 BC.

Dr Sarah Cooley
Lecturer in Archaeology
University of Sydney, Australia

AWAITING YOUR ANSWERS

Does anyone know what happened to the proposal by an African scientist (I'm afraid I do not recall his name) to provide refugee camps in Zaire with efficient small ovens that could be mass produced from scrap metal in a nearby town and that would reduce the burning of wood by a huge percentage?

Daphne Morgan
Southampton, England

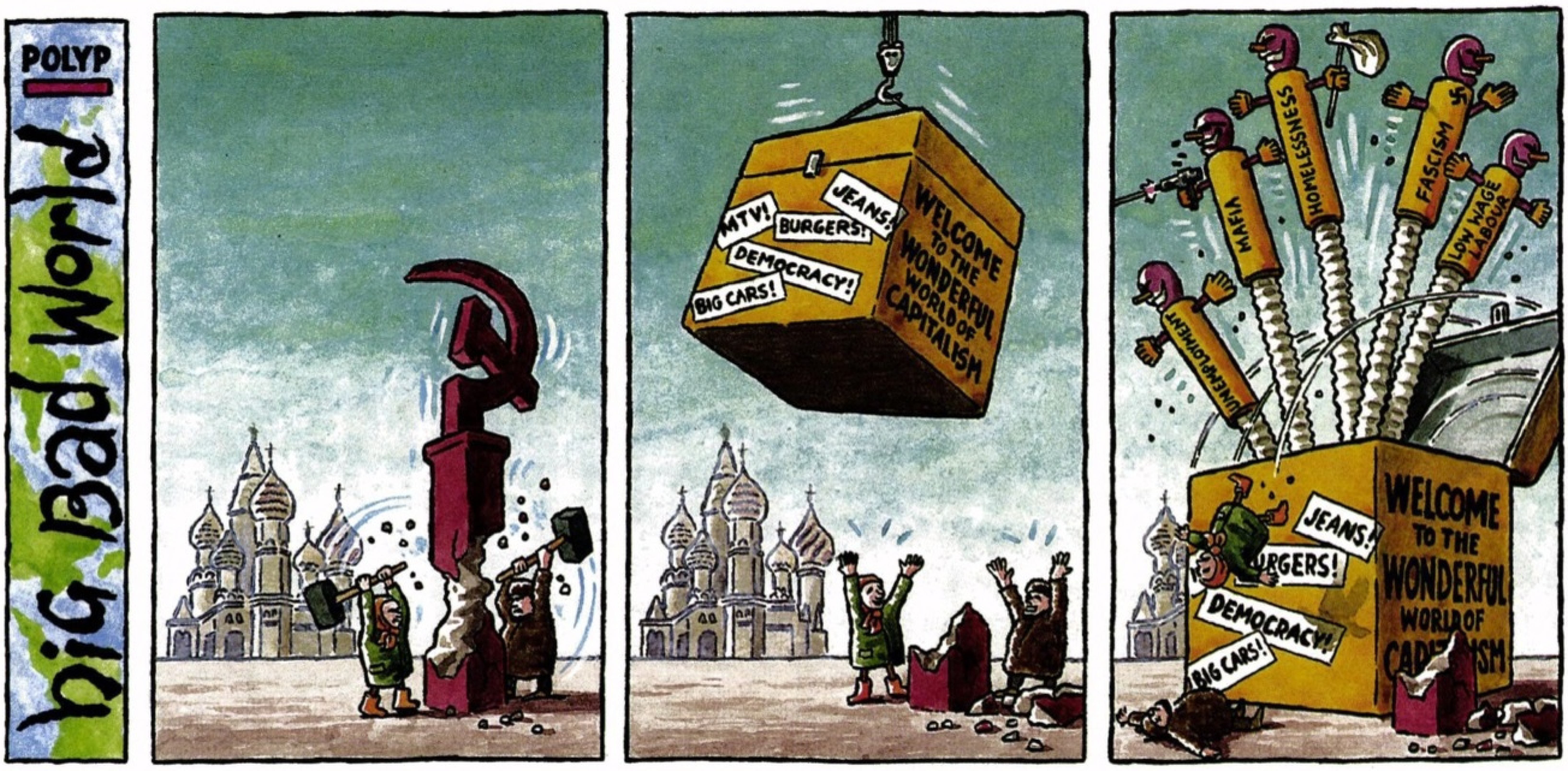
What are the benefits or disadvantages of adding fluoride to tap water?

CE Clarke
Jeddah, Saudi Arabia

Are there any cultures in the world where there is never any reason to exchange gifts?

James Phillips
Wigston, England

IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS OR ANSWERS PLEASE SEND THEM TO **CURIOSITIES, NEW INTERNATIONALIST, 55 RECTORY ROAD, OXFORD OX4 1BW, UK,** OR TO YOUR LOCAL NI OFFICE (SEE INSIDE FRONT COVER FOR ADDRESSES).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WELCOME TO THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF

Children of the disappeared

As the generals in Argentina confess to murder and torture, **Amaranta Wright** meets a brother and sister who are still trying to come to terms with the fate of their parents.

Martin sat in a downtown Buenos Aires bar staring at the front page of the newspaper. Army chief General Balza had accepted 'institutional responsibility' for torture and murder during the military government. 'It's become a circus, all these confessions,' said Martin. 'What does it all mean now, after so long? Pardons have been given. Nothing will happen. People have others things to worry about. I'm not interested. I've got on with my own life.'

One day, in May 1978, five-year-old Martin and his younger sister Adriana were about to tuck into a family lunch – not an everyday occurrence since their parents were often away organizing manoeuvres for the People's Revolutionary Army, the ERP. Deafening thuds penetrated the door. Their father knew why they had come. He dropped the children on the bed and searched for his gun. The last memory Martin has of his parents is of their being dragged out of the door, hooded and struggling.

Martin also criticizes the *Madres de la Plaza de Mayo*, the 'mothers of the disappeared', who, like his own grandmother, tried to keep the hope of their eventual return alive. 'They go on as if their sons and daughters were walking around in Paris or some place, waiting for the Government to fetch them. But they are all dead. All 33,000. And nothing can be done.'

Martin's 'reality' discourse is what most Argentinians have been running away from. Perhaps it is only now, with the admissions from the Army, that the 'disappeared' can become 'dead' and the debate that's been swept under the carpet opened up.

Martin shook his head at the suggestion. Lists of the dead, details of the tortured, cannot retrieve lost memories. 'Many of them believed and some of them fought for things that we can learn something from. They stood up against injustice and sacrificed their lives. What disappoints me most is that so much blood has been spilled and nobody has learned anything. People are still scared and won't stand up for their rights.'

His sister Adriana, now 19, was waiting for me later that evening at her home, a lodging house for young women. Spread out around her were clippings, books, photos, documents and pamphlets – the product of a year's frantic search for her identity. 'So you talked to my brother?' she says. 'He's very cynical. He closes his mind when it comes to this subject. Yes, he'll shout "My dad was a *guerrillero*", but he will never talk to me about what happened. As far as I can see he doesn't want to know the truth.'

Adriana only became aware of the truth a year ago. Since then she's been on the rampage, trying to get hold of information – from the orphanage where the police had left her and from anyone who knew her parents. 'The truth is everything to me. I have been living in everyone else's fear, secrecy and lies. My parents were a closed book. No-one admitted that they were dead, but neither would they talk about them, to keep their presence alive.'

When she was 15 she was brought to Buenos Aires by her aunt, who presented her with the first morsels of the truth. 'Even then, what I knew was only her version of what had happened. I couldn't bear the confusion. I've been through moments when I've wanted to kill myself, to get rid of the pain of this vacuum. I can't remember anything. I don't even have pictures of my parents with me. Anything about them is valuable to me. It's all I have.'

Despite many rejections, Adriana has hunted down her missing memories from old friends of the family: how her mother fixed her hair, what she wore, how she laughed, the things she liked to do. Her eyes widen and glow with pride as she talks about her parents.

Balza's confession makes her feel better. 'At least it justifies our cause to those who thought we were mad. Most of all the *Madres*. They have been sorely abused. I've been active for a year, but they have suffered for 19 years in the face of indifference and injustice. That would really have driven me mad. Then, one day, the oppressors admit to everyone: "In fact, the *Madres* were right." And you think, "finally!"'

She tries to understand why her brother won't admit there is a personal wound to be healed. 'Perhaps the pain for Martin is too great,' she suggests. 'He remembers what happened. My father taught him things about being a fighter and being committed. I have pictures drawn by Martin in the orphanage. They're all of soldiers and flags. He idolized his father and was then abandoned by him. Whenever I've tried to talk to him about it he's flown off the handle. It's easier for him to deal with it through scepticism.'

Martin has his ideals, though. He guards them like the brave soldier in his pictures. He plans to start an 'alternative' school teaching self-sufficiency in a small town in the interior, 'where I know I'm needed'.

Adriana, meanwhile, has found comfort from a Protestant church group which she joined after her aunt renounced responsibility for her. 'They gave me the affection I lacked,' she says. 'Most of all, they accompanied me through the aggression and madness that nobody else could cope with.'

Now, working as a nurse, she feels stronger than ever and is deeply committed to the cause of human rights. 'I know I can't expect much from the justice system. But fighting for truth, if not for myself, is what I owe my parents.' ■

A year ago **Amaranta Wright** returned to Buenos Aires, her birthplace, for the first time. She currently writes for the *Buenos Aires Herald*.

PALUDI
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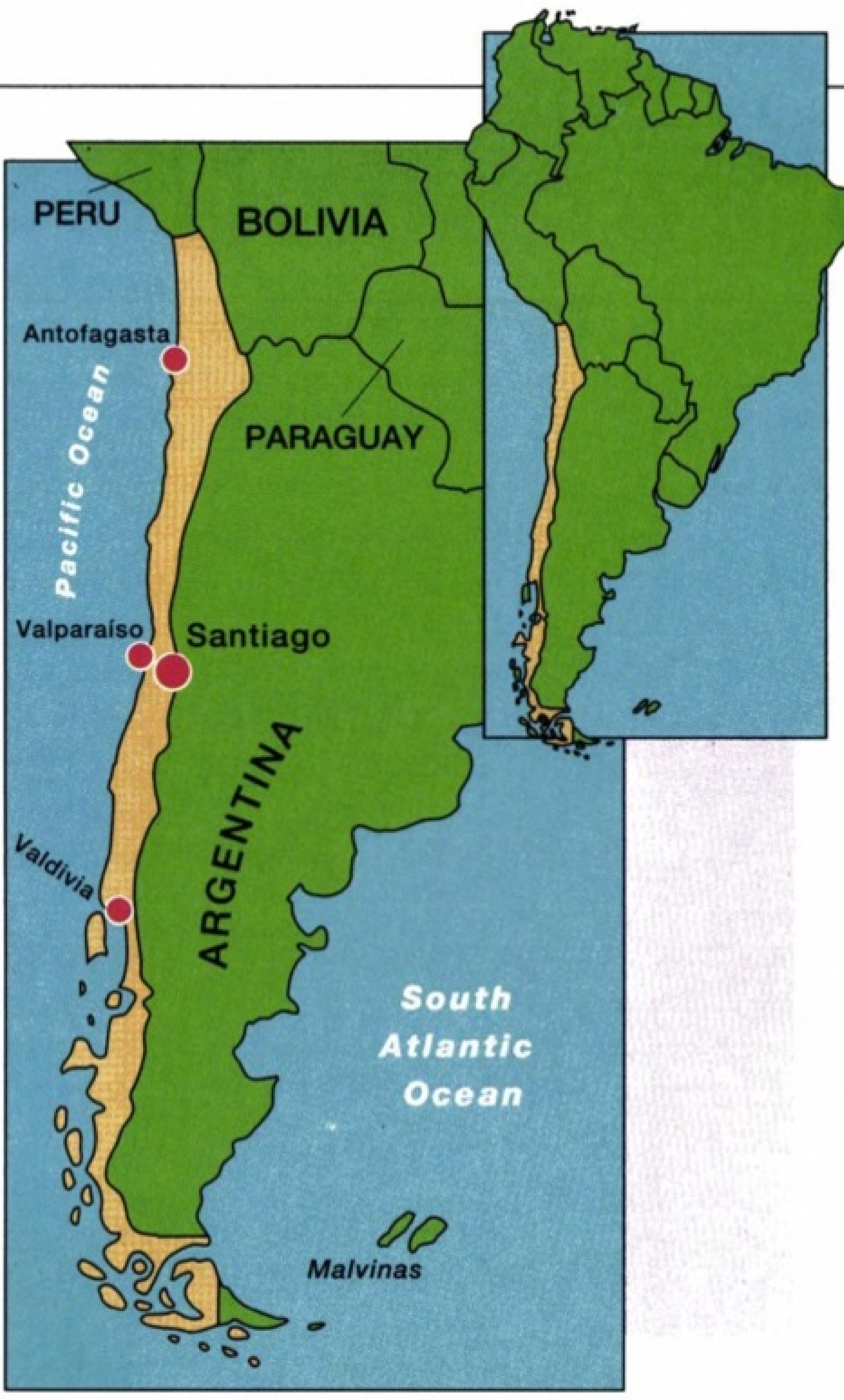
CAMERA PRESS (PUCCIANO)

Country profile

Chile



With its emaciated outline and its amazingly diverse landscape – from the parched Atacama Desert in the north, through fertile farmland and volcanoes to the fjords and glaciers of the south – Chile is a country of extremes. But the extremes it is best known for are political rather than geographic. The democratic election in 1970 of charismatic Marxist Salvador Allende led in 1973 to a US-backed military coup. Allende was murdered and the human-rights atrocities committed under the regime of General Augusto Pinochet caused consternation the world over. Even now, on each anniversary of the coup the Right holds a mass and celebrates while the Left demonstrates and demands justice for victims and their families. In the Pinochet years Chile also became the laboratory in which the Thatcher-Reagan guru Milton Friedman tested his monetarist economic doctrine in its most extreme form.

It is now seven years since the Chilean people voted 'yes' to democracy, effectively ending Pinochet's dictatorship, and five since they elected a new President. Yet Pinochet's influence remains: he is still head of the armed forces and has a high media profile as well as the support of the wealthy élite. In 1993, while President Aylwin was giving a speech in Norway about the good relationship between the Army and the Government, every member of the armed forces, including Pinochet himself, dressed in camouflage gear and took to the streets of the capital, Santiago, for 'training exercises'. Helicopters flew low over the city with soldiers hanging from ropes and Wagner's *Ride of the Valkyries* blaring out – an echo of Coppola's Vietnam movie *Apocalypse Now*. Many politicians took refuge in foreign embassies and for a few days a coup seemed imminent.

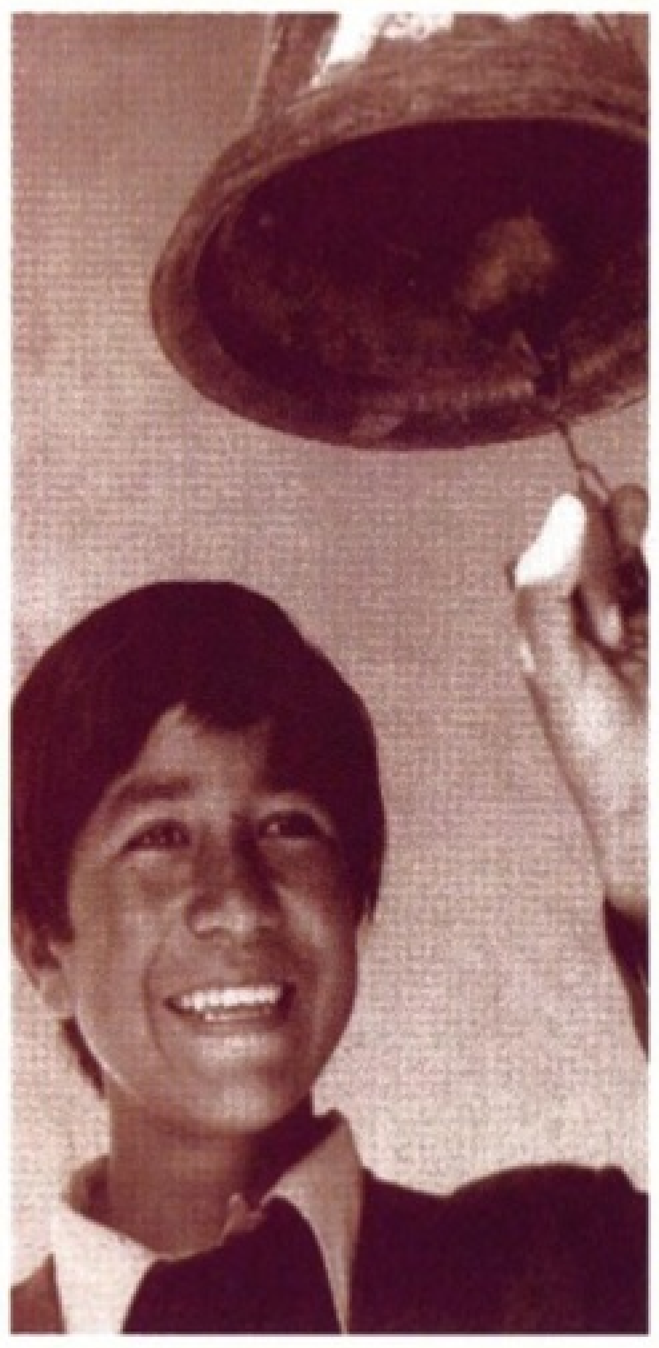
But in reality a coup is not necessary. Pressure from the armed forces has reduced the number of people imprisoned for torture and murder during the dictatorship to a handful.

Besides, Chile is a democracy founded on a dictator's constitution: the civilian government is obliged to continue Pinochet's right-wing economic policies and has virtually no power to make constitutional changes. The two-thirds majority needed to pass legislation in Congress means that only laws approved of by the Right go through. And 'security' matters are handled by a seven-person national Security Council on which the President, the Senate leader and the head of the Supreme Court are outvoted by the heads of the four armed services.

The strategy has paid off. The democratic apparatus means the rest of the world no longer disapproves and the economy is the fastest growing in the region – as a result Chile is the first South American country to have been invited to join the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). But the new wealth is not trickling down to the inhabitants of the *poblaciones*, or shanty towns. And while Chile's economy is being called the tiger of Latin America those who wish for a change in political priorities are all too aware of the Army's sharp teeth. ■

Charlie Warshawski

AT A GLANCE


ERIC L WHEATER

Leader President Eduardo Frei Ruiz-Tagle
Economy GNP $2,730 *(US $23,240)*
Monetary unit: Chilean peso
Main exports: Copper, fishmeal (Chile is the world's biggest producer of both), fresh fruit and lithium (newly exploited but Chile has 40% of the world's reserves).
Copper accounts for almost half of exports so Chile remains very vulnerable to shifts in its price on the world market. Privatized industries have been largely swallowed by financial conglomerates.
People 13.8 million
Health Infant mortality 15 per 1,000 live births *(Canada 9 per 1,000)*. Doctors: 1 for every 2,150 people *(Australia 1 for 436)*.
Culture 90 per cent of Chileans are *mestizos* (of mixed race). The Mapuche in the south are the main indigenous group but there are also the Aymara in the desert north and the Rapa Nui on Easter Island.
Religion: Roman Catholicism. Also small numbers of evangelical Protestants as well as indigenous faiths.
Languages: Spanish, though the indigenous groups each retain their own tongue.

Sources: *The World: A Third World Guide 1995/96; State of the World's Children 1995; The Americas Review 1993/94.*

Previously profiled June 1986.

NI star rating

EXCELLENT	★★★★★
GOOD	★★★★
FAIR	★★★
POOR	★★
APPALLING	★

STAR RATINGS

INCOME DISTRIBUTION
★★
Richest 20% of the population have 63% of the wealth; poorest 40% have only 11%.
1986 ★★

SELF-RELIANCE
★★★★
Agriculture sufficient to feed the entire population. Export-led economy dependent on world prices.
1986 ★★

POSITION OF WOMEN
★★★
Equal in law and active in the workplace but few in top positions. Traditional macho attitudes prevail in many quarters.
1986 ★★★

LITERACY
★★★★★
At 93%, only surpassed in Latin America by Cuba.
1986 ★★★★

FREEDOM
★★★
Some cases of torture and mysterious deaths in custody still reported. Homosexuality and divorce illegal.
1986★

LIFE EXPECTANCY
★★★★★
72 years. Compares with a regional average of 67 and a rich-world average of 76.
1986★★★★

POLITICS

NI ASSESSMENT ★★
President Frei was elected in 1993 as representative of a centre-left coalition, succeeding the Christian Democrat Patricio Aylwin. His room for manoeuvre is limited by the armed forces' continuing influence but in any event the pursuit of economic growth and NAFTA membership will continue to take precedence over concern for the poor.

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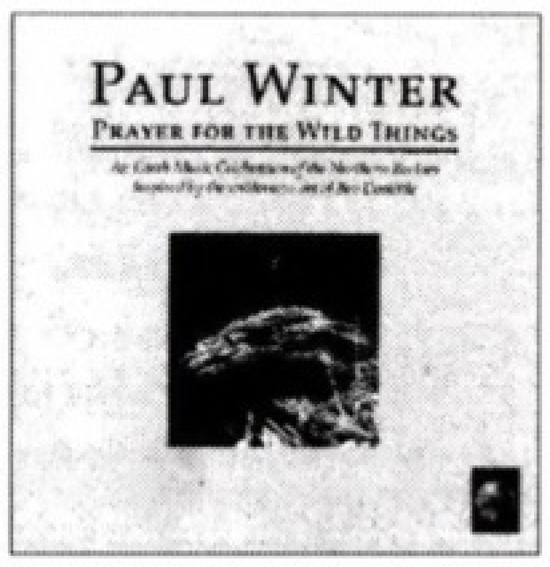

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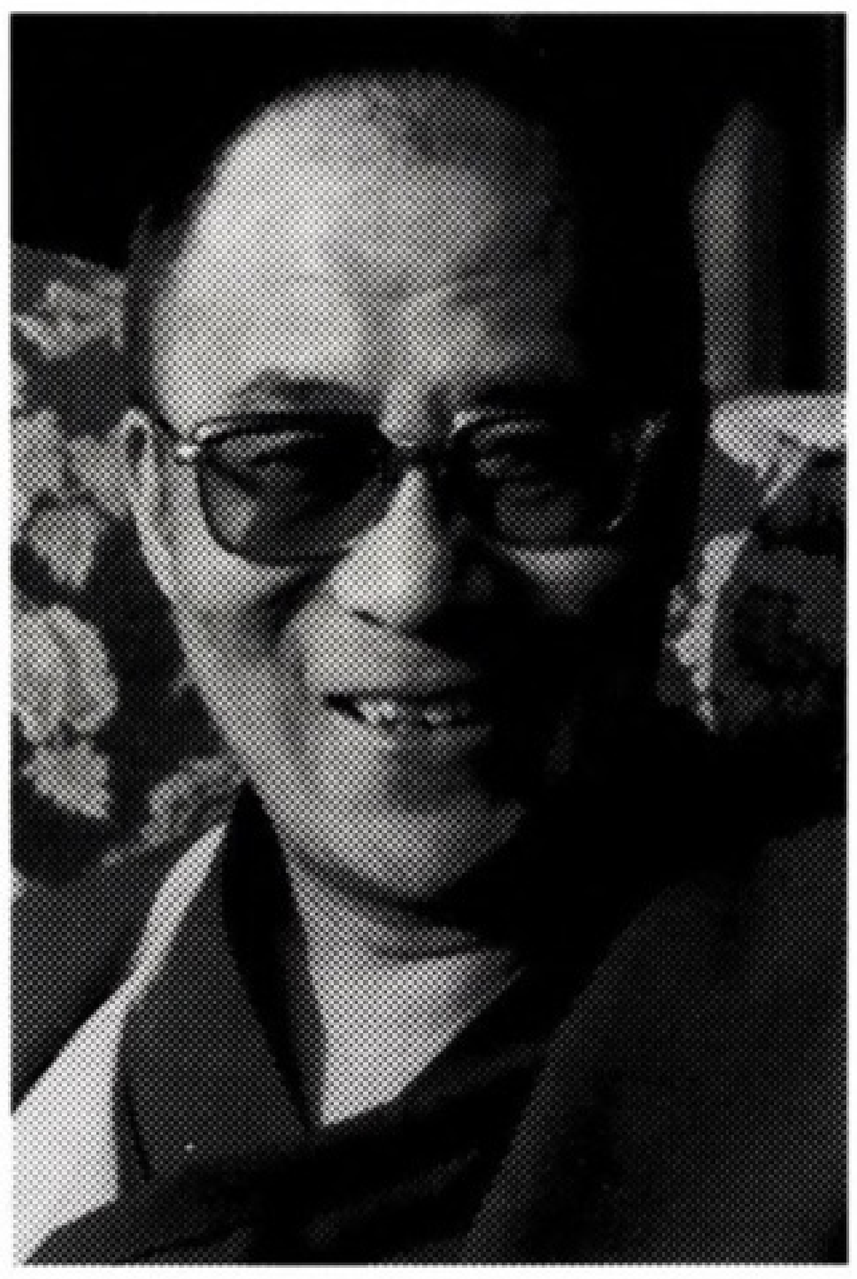

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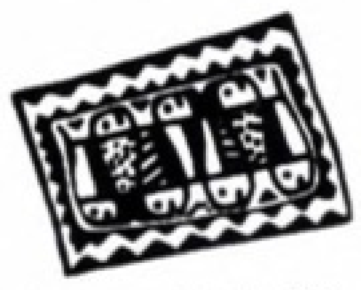
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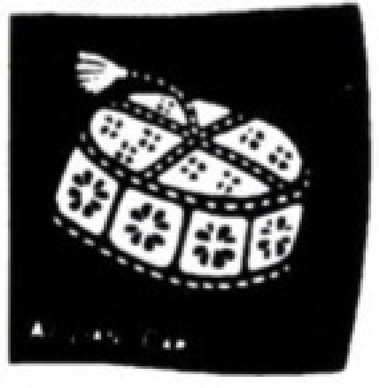

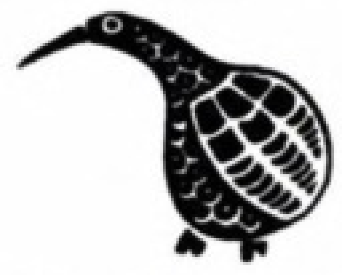
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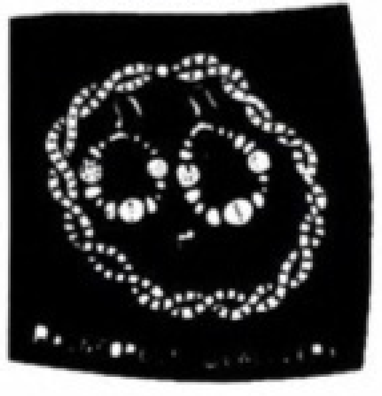

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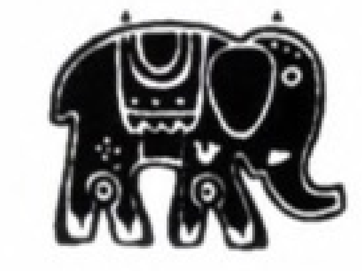
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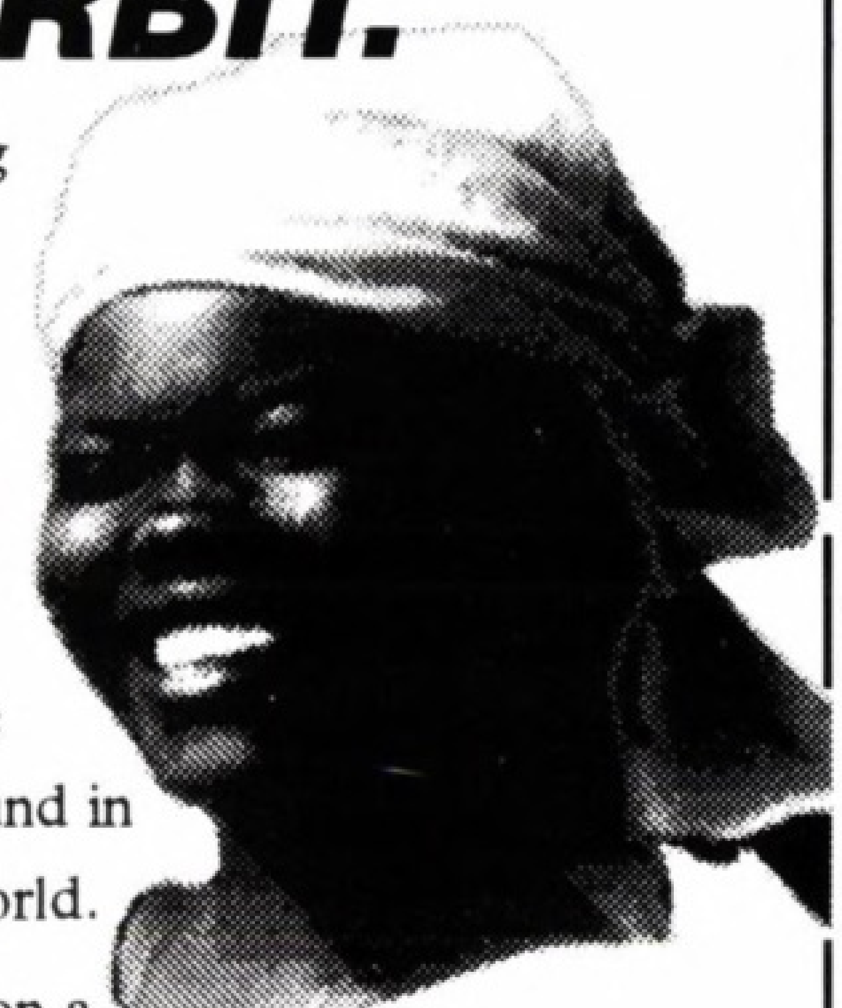

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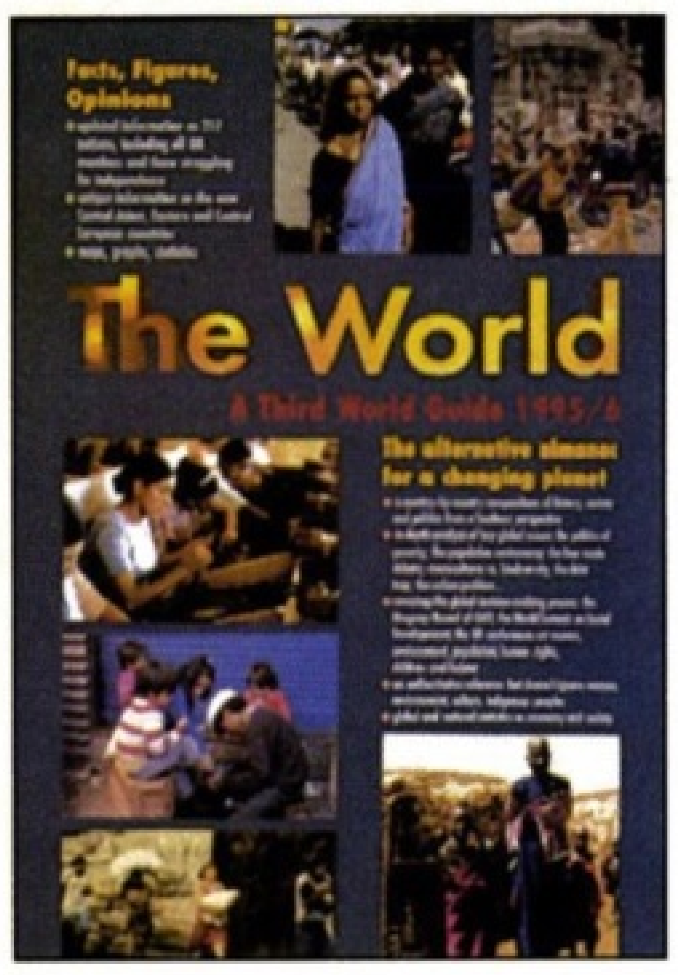

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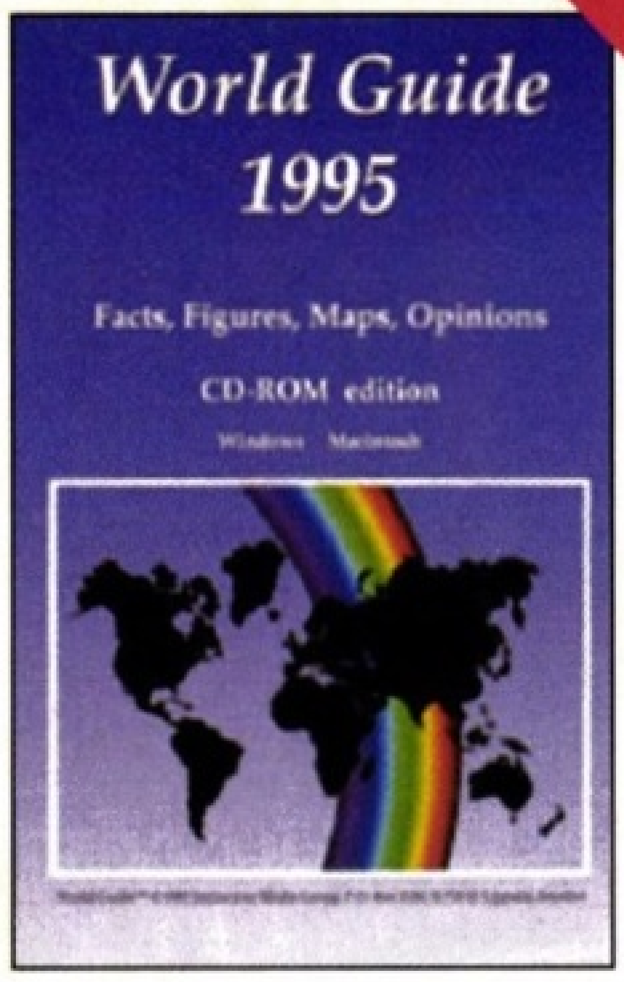

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